

Effective Early Learning Programme

Child Involvement Scale



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Rationale for the Concept of Involvement

What is 'Involvement'?

In this manual, the Leuven Involvement Scale for Young Children (LIS-YC) developed by Professor Ferre Laevers for the EXE Project, Leuven, Belgium (Laevers, 1994), is referred to throughout as the Child Involvement Scale.

Involvement is a quality of human activity:

- which can be recognised by a child's concentration and persistence;
- is characterised by motivation, fascination, an openness to stimuli and an intensity of experience both at the physical and cognitive level, and a deep satisfaction with a strong flow of energy;
- is determined by the 'exploratory' drive and the child's individual developmental needs;
- as a result of Involvement there is evidence to suggest that development occurs. (Laevers, 1993)

Involvement is a measure for quality applicable to an endless list of situations and observable at all ages. The degree to which babies concentrate on their environment and respond to the incoming stimuli can be defined (Bower, 1974). An involved child concentrates his/her attention on a specific focus, wants to continue the activity and to persist in it, and is rarely, if ever distracted.

One of the most predominant characteristics of Involvement is motivation. An involved child is fascinated and is totally absorbed in the activity, the time passes quickly for the child. An involved child is extremely alert and sensitive to relevant stimuli, releases an immense amount of energy and experiences a wonderful feeling of satisfaction. The source of this satisfaction is an inbuilt desire for the child to gain a better understanding of reality.

Involvement can be distinguished from the intense experiences which are emotionally motivated e.g. tantrums. Involvement does not occur when the activities are too easy or when the task is too demanding. It is situated at the edge of a child's capabilities, or in the "Zone of Proximal Development" (Vygotsky, 1962). There is evidence to suggest that an 'involved' child is gaining a deep, motivated, intense and long term learning experience (Csikszentmihayli, 1979, Laevers, 1994).

The Child Involvement Scale

The Child Involvement Scale consists of two components:

1. A list of signals;
2. The levels of Involvement in a 5 point scale.

The Child Involvement Signals

- ***Concentration***

The attention of the child is directed toward the activity. Nothing can distract the child from his/her deep concentration.

- ***Energy***

The child invests much effort in the activity and is eager and stimulated. Such energy is often expressed by loud talking, or pressing down hard on the paper. Mental energy can be deduced from facial expressions which reveal 'hard' thinking.

- ***Complexity and Creativity***

This signal is shown when a child freely mobilises his cognitive skills and other capabilities in more than routine behaviour. The child involved cannot show more competence - he/she is at his/her very 'best'. Creativity does not mean that original products have to result, but that the child exhibits an individual touch and what she/he does furthers his/her own creative development. The child is at the very edge of his/her capabilities.

- ***Facial Expression and Posture***

Nonverbal signs are extremely important in reaching a judgment about Involvement. It is possible to distinguish between 'dreamy empty' eyes and 'intense' eyes. Posture can reveal high concentration or boredom. Even when children are seen only from the back, their posture can be revealing.

- ***Persistence***

Persistence is the duration of the concentration at the activity. Children who are really involved do not let go of the activity easily; they want to continue with the satisfaction, flavour and intensity it gives them, and are prepared to put in effort to prolong it. They are not easily distracted by other activities. 'Involved' activity is often more prolonged but it can be dependent on the age and the development of the child.

- *Precision*

Involved children show special care for their work and are attentive to detail. Non-involved children gloss over such detail, it is not so important to them.

- *Reaction time*

Children who are involved are alert and react quickly to stimuli introduced during an activity e.g. children 'fly' to a proposed activity and show prolonged motivation and keenness. (NB. Involvement is more than an initial reaction.)

- *Language*

Children can show that an activity has been important to them by their comments e.g. they ask for the activity repeatedly. They state that they enjoyed it!

- *Satisfaction*

The children display a feeling of satisfaction with their achievements.

NB.

The signals are channels for observer awareness. They are not to be used on a scale basis, instead they are a means of making an overall judgment of the child's Involvement. The observer can use the signals to build an image of the child. By trying to establish how the child really feels, and by trying to become that child, the level of Involvement can be ascertained.

These signals can be exhibited in different ways by different children. Individual children need to be observed and their signals recognised.

Child Involvement Scale

(to be read in conjunction with the signals for Involvement)

Level 1. Low Activity

Activity at this level can be simple, stereotypic, repetitive and passive. The child is absent and displays no energy. There is an absence of cognitive demand. The child characteristically may stare into space. N.B. This may be a sign of inner concentration.

Level 2. A Frequently Interrupted Activity

The child is engaged in an activity but half of the observed period includes moments of non-activity, in which the child is not concentrating and is staring into space. There may be frequent interruptions in the child's concentration, but his/her Involvement is not enough to return to the activity.

Level 3. Mainly Continuous Activity

The child is busy at an activity but it is at a routine level and the real signals for Involvement are missing. There is some progress but energy is lacking and concentration is at a routine level. The child can be easily distracted.

Level 4. Continuous Activity with Intense Moments

The child's activity has intense moments during which activities at Level 3 can come to have special meaning. Level 4 is reserved for the kind of activity seen in those intense moments, and can be deduced from the 'Involvement signals'. This level of activity is resumed after interruptions. Stimuli, from the surrounding environment, however attractive cannot seduce the child away from the activity.

Level 5. Sustained Intense Activity

The child shows continuous and intense activity revealing the greatest **Involvement**. In the observed period not all the signals for Involvement need be there, but the essential ones must be present: concentration, creativity, energy and persistence. This intensity must be present for almost all the observation period.

How to carry out the observations

Professional Childhood Educators should be able to make informed and critical judgments about the quality of teaching and learning they offer. We are aware of the need to foster positive working relations with colleagues. We should stress, however, the importance of conducting these observations as honestly and openly as possible, to provide an effective means of developing the quality of your practice.

- Observe 50% of your study children up to a maximum of 12 children. Ensure an equal number of both sexes and ages.
- Complete observations during two sessions in one week (1 in am and 1 in pm where applicable)
- Each observation to last 2 minutes.
- Observe each child three times per session but not continuously.
- A total of six observations/ twelve minutes per child.
- Record each observation on the Child Involvement Observation Sheet. Two sheets per child.

How to complete the Child Involvement Observation Sheet

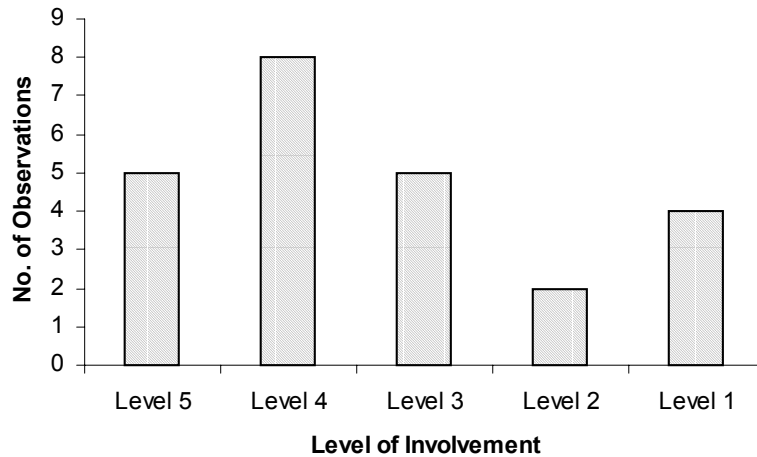
(NB. A copy of the Involvement observation sheet can be found at the end of this step)

- Complete the number of children present in the setting during the observed session.
- Complete the number of adults present in the setting during the observed session.
- Circle AM or PM.
- Complete time of observation. NB. Ensure the observations are not continuous.
- Complete a brief description of the observed period.
- Enter your decision regarding the dominant level of Involvement for each 2 minute observation by ticking the appropriate box. NB. Remember to use the signals for Involvement and the description of the levels as an aid.

- Enter your decision regarding the dominant learning areas experienced by the child during the observed period. Tick the relevant boxes.

Instructions for Child Involvement data analysis

- Tally all the observed children's levels of Involvement and collate this into a bar graph. This will indicate the range and average levels of Involvement per setting. See the example below.



- The Involvement observations provide a wealth of data, for example, on learning experiences. Comparison can also be made between am/pm and boys/girls. The blank graphs on page 91 and 92 of the Evaluation Report can be used where appropriate for your study.

Child Involvement Observation Proforma

Name of setting

Observer

Date

Name of child..... Sex Age

Special educational needs, if applicable

No. of children present No. of adults present

	Involvement Level					Learning Areas				
AM / PM	5	4	3	2	1	CUL	C	KUW	M	I
Description of 2 minute period										
TIME										
TIME										
TIME										

