

Observational Template (Semi-structured)

Note: Please make sure to read the assessment guidance for this assessment. The boxes below should expand as you type.

Name: Sarah

Teacher/adult input:

The practitioner actively engages with Sarah and demonstrates a toy car rolling down a ramp. Sarah not only imitates the practitioner's physical actions but also her verbal sounds. Sarah notices when the practitioner leaves but Sarah can continue unaided. Sarah has a slight disagreement with another child over a box, Sarah is trying to sit on the box whilst the other child is playing with a car on top of the box, it seems that a practitioner alerts another to call Sarah away from the situation seemingly to avoid any more conflict.

The practitioner calls Sarah over to join in a puzzle game to create a circle, Sarah can complete the puzzle by creating a circle, although she has not done it correctly. Another practitioner calls Sarah away from the group to play with some coloured dinosaurs. Both practitioners encourage the development of language through shapes and colours. The practitioners do however leave all activities abruptly without warning, this confuses Sarah and she shows slight agitation by this. There is limited adult input throughout the observation.

What the child is expected to do:

Sarah is approximately between two and three years old, according to Oakley (2004) this means Sarah should fall into Piaget's Preconceptual period which is the early substage of the Preoperational stage.

During the observation Sarah is expected to complete various tasks including, creating a circle with various puzzle pieces, naming the characteristics and features of coloured dinosaurs and using a toy car appropriately.

Support given:

When Sarah is playing the practitioner engages with her to play with the car and ramp. The practitioner is providing Sarah an example of how to play with toys. The practitioner also shows Sarah and a small group of children how to create a circle with some puzzles. The practitioner asks Sarah questions about the colour and shape of the puzzle pieces.

Later another practitioner takes Sarah to another table to play with coloured dinosaurs. Both practitioners are continuing to develop language and colours whilst engaging with different

activities, the practitioner asks Sarah questions about the characteristics of the dinosaurs. Even though there is some evidence of adult support, the support is limited.

Child interactions with others:

At first Sarah does not interact with anyone, although she is aware of the camera and the other children around her and observes them. When some of the children are roaring, she shows interest and goes to investigate. Later Sarah stacks some blocks with another child and collects more blocks to share with other children. When the practitioner comes to sit with Sarah she is at first startled but soon sits down to play. After the adult leaves the activity Sarah continues to play with the car alongside another child. Sarah shows awareness of the camera throughout and tries to interact with the camera person on various occasions. She actively seeks the recognition of the practitioners when she has completed tasks after they have left the group. Sarah seems to be fairly sociable and shows occasional willingness to play and interact with others.

Summary of strengths/difficulties:

Sarah knows how to play appropriately with toys available. She showcases good imaginary play whilst using block as a phone and a camera. It is not clear in the video, but it appears that Sarah's language development is delayed, this could be due to an underlying condition as in some instances Sarah seems to 'space out' and is unaware of what is going on for a few seconds, an example of this is when Sarah is startled when the practitioner comes to sit with her. It is as if Sarah is completely oblivious of the practitioner approaching her until the practitioner is within proximity. This could have potentially adverse effects on her development.

Provide an overview of the child's cognitive development based on Piaget's theory of cognitive development (APA essay style):

According to Piaget Theory of Cognitive Development, Sarah at the approximate age of 2-3 years should be at the development stage of Preoperational, more specifically, the preconceptual period, (Oakley, 2004).

Sarah displays elements of this stage by role playing (playing with phone) and through symbolic play (using the wooden block as a camera). This form of play that represents real life is an important part of development and showcases Sarah ability to observe the environment that surrounds her and then act upon it to further develop her knowledge. According to constructivists this is how we gain knowledge, Peterson, (2017).

Another element of the preconceptual stage that is displayed by Sarah is egocentrism. Egocentrism, according to Oakley, (2004), is when a child can only see from their own perspective

and has difficulty understanding others' perspectives. This is briefly shown when Sarah tries to sit on the box that another child is playing on and also when she shows sign of distress due to another child taking her puzzle pieces, this according to Halpenny & Petterson, (2013), continues throughout the preconceptual stage.

Halpenny & Petterson, (2013), states that object permanence is the term used by Piaget to describe, 'the child's understanding that objects continue to exist even when the individual is not perceptually aware of them'. Sarah shows elements of this stage by locating a block without looking for it, this suggests that Sarah is able to search for the block without actually seeing it as she has created a mental representation for the block.

Sarah also shows evidence of the sensorimotor stage, this could be due to an underlying neurodiverse issue as according to Gillibrand et al, (2016), children who have special or additional learning needs may develop in different ways the developmental stages, it can often be unusual or uneven, for instance, a child may learn to walk at the usual age but there could be a language delay. This form of development could suggest that Piaget did not anticipate neurodiversity in his research this could show criticism of Piaget's theory of development as he believed that children must complete one developmental stage before beginning another, (Sutherland, 1992). Babakr, et al (2019), claimed that there was evidence of bias in Piaget's original theory of Cognitive Development adding that Piaget 'neglected cultural and social interaction factors in the development of children's cognition and thinking ability.

According to Cacioppo et al, (2013), three essential developments occur during the sensorimotor stage, the first occurs by 18 months in which children can express limited vocabulary, then by 2 years, can express short, meaningful sentences. Sarah seems to be in the middle of this first stage with regards to her language as it is rather limited with her although she is above the age for this stage. Martin et al, (2010), claims that the second essential development is 'deferred imitation' where children develop their ability to imitate others. Sarah is able to imitate others and shows aspects of this throughout the observation. Then finally children are able to relatively represent and imagine symbols, there is no evidence of this development in the observation.

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