

The Leuven Involvement Scale (LIS)

In Reflective Teaching in Early Education we have stated you may use observations to gain a general understanding of a child’s well-being and involvement. The Leuven Involvement Scale (LIS) allows you to apply a process whereby you can make more detailed judgements about the depth of these states in children. The main focus is to be able to look at the educational experience from the child's point of view. The LIS uses a five-point graded scale, explained in the table below.

Level of involvement	Characteristics
Level 1 Low level involvement	The child can appear mentally absent. Any action can appear purely repetitive.
Level 2	The child is engaged in an activity but is open to many distractions and will not necessarily return to the activity voluntarily.
Level 3	The child is engaged in an activity but not really involved in it. Energy and enthusiasm and sustained concentration appear to be lacking.
Level 4	Moments of intense mental activity occur and the motivation is there to sustain this even after interruptions or distractions.
Level 5 High level involvement	Total involvement expressed by concentration and absolute continuous and sustained involvement. Any interruption would be experienced as a frustrating rupture of a smoothly running activity. The child shows concentration, creativity, energy and perseverance.

Table: Identifying levels of involvement – Leuven Involvement Scale (LIS)

To apply this to children's behaviours, it is necessary for the adult to try to become the child – to think oneself into the mind of the child, to empathize, in order to be able to assess the observed experience. It may be useful to consider each of these levels concerning children's behaviour. Are children who are involved in tasks less likely to become involved in disruptive or challenging behaviours? Are children who are struggling to settle less likely to be able to become involved? (see Broadbent, Reading 7.2).

Laevers describes Level 5 of the LIS, the state of total concentration, as a 'state of flow'. This is based on Csikszentmihalyi (1979), who describes this 'state of flow' as where a great deal of mental energy is being used in an efficient way. Thus, when conducting observations of children's levels of involvement, one must consider whether the activity is too easy or beyond the present capabilities of the child, as this is likely to impact upon involvement.

Katz (1993), presents some questions we can ask of ourselves but also ask of our settings:

- Are most of the activities interesting, rather than frivolous or boring?
- Are most of the activities meaningful, rather than trivial or mindless?
- Are most of the activities engaging and absorbing, rather than just amusing, fun, entertaining or exciting?

The answers to these questions are likely to have a direct link to types of behaviour displayed in any setting. In the following chapters, we will consider how we can provide a range of appropriate and engaging activities for all of the children in your setting. Suffice to say not doing so may impact the behaviours of the children in our care.

References

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. Harper & Row.

Katz, L. G. (1993) Five Perspectives on Quality in Early Childhood Programs, ERIC/EECE: A Monograph Series, No. 1.: Pennsylvania.