***Group interaction with 4 children aged 5-6 (year 1) in a primary school setting***

***Background information related to my group interaction***

*Currently, my work placement is taking place in a local primary school by me. It is called Moss Croft Primary School. My group interaction involved four children aged between 5-6 years. The interaction took place on Wednesday 14th November 2018 and it gave me a great opportunity to practice and increase my communication skills in a Health and Social Care related setting. The pupils in my group interaction was in year 1 and it took place the second week I started my work experience in the primary school. I chose this day because I felt comfortable with all the pupils in year 1 as well as the teachers in my department. Also, the teaching professional who teaches year 1 suggested this opportunity to me so I accepted the offer of doing a group interaction with a small group of children. The group interaction took place in the morning at 11:00am because the teacher was teaching mathematics at this time and my activity with the children was maths related. The purpose of my group interaction with the children was to develop mine and the child’s communication skills and for me to develop different skills in a care related setting. Also, the interaction would have been very beneficial to the children’s problem solving skills and numeracy skills. By doing this interaction gives me great experience for working alongside other individuals.*

***Preparation for my group interaction***

*For my group interaction, I did not do a formal written plan because I was assigned this task by the year 1 teacher that day. However, I was giving one hour to understand what I needed to do with the children. In this time, I was giving, I had the opportunity to get all the equipment I needed to set it out on the tables. I done this because I knew it would not be time consuming. For the activity, I needed to get the children’s mathematic work sheets that they needed to complete by the end of the activity. The teacher had already printed them of, ready to hand them to me. Also, I left a few whiteboards and whiteboard pens on the table for a method of solving problems as well as marbles so the children could use these as a counting strategy. By doing this I knew that effective communication would take place between me and the children as well as them increasing their knowledge of maths. The activity I was assigned to do with the children was number bonding as well as adding and subtracting numbers.*

***Awareness of the client’s individual needs and communication preferences***

*Before my group interaction started with the four children, the teacher who teaches the children informed me about their learning abilities. Also, I was allowed to access their books and the maths record that the teacher keeps to write up their pupil’s progression in this subject. By doing this I could identify that the children’s learning progression was lower than the other children in their class. The teacher informed me that they have learning difficulties and struggle to understand tasks that they are giving. The teacher made me aware that child A and child B, had no understanding of how to add or subtract numbers and had difficulty pronouncing numbers. Therefore, I made sure that I gave these two children extra support. Also, I took into account that the children are much younger than I am therefore, I had to use simple methods to help them understand better instead of using difficult equations and problem solving methods. I made sure that I familiarised myself with the children’s preferred language, and made sure that they understand the language I was going to use (English), so I could communicate with them in the activity effectively. However, all the children I was going to work with spoke English so I didn’t need to change the language I spoke. However, I had to make sure that I spoke a bit slower than I usually do and more loudly so the children could grasp what I was saying to them. The teacher informed me on what the children were capable of and also what they need to work on as they struggle a lot with numbers. With having access to information about each child, it made it easier for me doing the activity. Also, it made the group interaction more effective. The care practitioner gave showed me the children’s books so I could get a rough understanding of what the children needs help with when doing number bonds, adding and subtracting numbers. This was very useful in getting to know their learning abilities as well as their efforts in their work. If I didn’t know any information about the children, it would have caused lots of barriers to our communications, however, it didn’t because the teacher informed me about them as well as giving me useful sources to look at. To meet the children’s preferred method to communication, we spoke, wrote and done arts and crafts so I could notice and identify their strengths, weaknesses, confusion and understanding.*

***Environmental Barriers***

*When doing the group interaction, I knew that I need to take account of any environmental barriers because I didn’t want anything distracting or disrupting the children’s learning. Environmental barriers often limit or prevent a person doing what they want to do. Especially people with disabitlies* ***(Springer Link).***

*In the year 1 classroom, it is very noisy and is distracting for children when trying to learn, especially doing an activity that involves some kind of creativity. Therefore, I spoke to the teacher and asked would it be possible to do the activity during assembly time because the children won’t be distracted by the other pupils because the children will be attending assembly. The teacher of year 1 gave me confirmation and accepted. This demonstrates that I prevented an environmental barrier taking place during the group interaction. I knew that If I done my group interaction when all the children were present, the four children I was doing the interaction with would have struggled to communicate with me because of the high level of noise. Also, I had to turn all lights on in the classroom so the children could see the worksheets they had to complete. By preventing and stopping these environmental barriers, allowed effective communication to be present during their group interaction. By slowing my words down to the children, made them understand what I was saying to them. They also had understanding of what the task was about because I explained it to them effectively. This gave my interaction good qualities. Next time, to make improvements, I would allocate me and the children to a different classroom because we only had 15 minutes to do the activity. This was because the assembly was on for 15 minutes and then the children had to return back to their classroom.*

***My use of communication skills during my group interaction***

*During the group interaction, when the children where communicating to me, I made it a priority to actively listen to everything they said. I done this because If the child was really struggling and they mentioned it to me, I was able to help them out to the best of my ability. This shows that I was listening and understanding everything that they were saying to me because I responded to the children and showed them how to solve a problem. For example, the little girl (child C) said an equation out loud to me with the answer. I listened and focused on what she was saying and corrected her as the answer was wrong. I helped her correct her mistakes by getting marbles and adding two onto 3. By doing this she added them all up together and got the correct results. When communicating with all children, I made sure that my voice was at the right noise level so they could all hear me and the words I where saying was clear. This gave the group interaction great qualities and the communication was effective within the group. Also, it reveals that effective communication was present in the group interaction because the child C and I used a method for them to understand how to get the right answer to the question. During the one to one interaction, I used Tuckman’s communication theory, to make sure that my communication was effective for all the individuals. By asking the children questions about the equations and different maths sums showed the children and observer that I was focused and keen to help learn the children different numeracy skills.*

***Non-verbal communication***

***Proximity****- Proximity is nearness in space, time or relationships* ***(Oxford English living dictionaries).***

*In my group interaction with the four children in Moss Croft Primary School, I made sure I used proximity correctly and effectively. When doing the interaction, I knew I had to position myself somewhere were all four children could see and hear me. I got all the children to sit down around a table and positioned a chair directly facing each individual. I done this so I could see the children and I was able to notice who was struggling with the task. This was very effective in the group interaction because all of the children could hear what I was saying as well as see me clearly. I made sure that each child was left a gap between their chairs as I respected their personal space. If I wouldn’t have left a space, a child could have felt uncomfortable and possibly could have felt that someone else was invading their space. By doing this, it made the children feel comfortable in doing the activity and because of this it gave the interaction good qualities. The observer in the group interaction marked 1 (being excellent) as my rating score for proximity. This reveals that I used this skill effectively and took account of it in the correct way.*

***Appropriate posture****- It was very important to me that I presented myself in a confident smart way because I wanted to show the children and observer that I was being professional. Posture is the way you present yourself to other individuals and the way you position your body* ***(Merriam Webster since 1828).*** *When the interaction was taking place, I made sure that I did not slouch in my chair or have a boredom approach. Instead I sat up straight and sat on my chair properly to show that I was motivated in learning the children and to help to the best of my abilities. I wanted to present myself in a positive way so the children would imamate me. By doing this, the children did not sit in a lazy way. This benefitted the communication between me and the children because they were fully engaged in learning and doing the activity. The female observer marked 1 (being excellent) as my rating score for appropriate posture. The observer said “that I presented myself in a respectful manor and was not lazy doing the task”.*

**Facial expression**- Facial expressions are the changing movement of your face. For example, moving your eye brows up, down or together demonstrates that your angry, confused or amazed **(Macmillan Dictionary).** Throughout the group interaction, I made sure I used my facial expressions appropriately and effectively. When the children got a question right or was trying extremely hard to get the correct answer, I made sure that I showed them that I was proud of their effort and hard work. To do this I used my facial expressions positively and raised my eye brows to show amazement. It was important to me that I didn’t present my facial expressions in a negative way because if I did, the children might have imitated my behaviour. This would have given the interaction bad qualities because the children wouldn’t have completed their work to the best of their abilities. The observer present in the interaction marked 1 (being excellent) as my rating score for facial expressions. This implies that I used this skill to the best of my ability and I also used facial expressions effectively.

**Eye contact**- During my group interaction, it involved me using the skill of eye contact. I made sure that I used this skill effectively and appropriately. This is because I wanted to show the children that I was focused on increasing their learning and help them if they struggled to understand what they needed to do. When having a conversation with each child about the maths questions, I showed them respect by listening to them and using eye contact to show understanding. By doing this, it showed the children and observer that I was interested in the activity I was doing with the four children. However, I knew that if I constantly used eye contact, it would have made the children feel uncomfortable or on the spot. By knowing this, I prevented this from happening by only using eye contact if needed to, especially when communicating and helping a child if needed to. This made the group interaction more effective and the communication flowed more. The observer marked 1 (being excellent) as my rating score for eye contact.

**Gestures**- A gesture is there movement of a body part. For example, the movement of the hands, arms, or head **(Cambridge Dictionary).**

In the group interaction, I found it easier to use gesture to show the children some understanding of how to add and subtract numbers in maths. Gestures gave me a great opportunity to reveal a mathematic method that is effective and correct. For example, an equation I showed their group of children was 4+3. To do this I used the movement of my hands to reveal the answer to this equation. The child imitated my gestures and understood the answer to the question. Me and the child held up four fingers on one hand and then three fingers on the other hand. After we done this the children counted up how many fingers were up all together. This demonstrates that gestures where effective in getting the correct answer. Also, when the children were working hard and getting the right answers, I put a thumbs up to them. The children understood this because it is a positive hand gesture. The observer marked 1 (being excellent) as my Rating score for gestures. Also she said “that I used positive hand gestures that the children understood and they were not inappropriate.

**Tone of Voice**- During my group interaction, I made sure that my chosen tone of voice didn’t leave a negative effective on each child present in the interaction. I made sure that I expressed myself positively so it left the children with great impressions of me. Also, by using an effective tone of voice shows that you are an understanding person. I took into consideration that the children I was working with were much younger than that I was therefore I had to increase the level of noise I used to communicate because the children may not hear or understand what I was saying. I also, knew that the children had less understanding that the other children in their class. I made sure that the tone of my voice was clear with the correct level of noise. To do this, I asked each child if they could hear what I was saying and if it was clear and loud enough for them. The observer in the interaction marked 1 (being excellent) as my rating score for tone of voice. This demonstrates that I used this skill to the best of my ability. Next time I do a group interaction; I will make sure that I always check that the children understand what I am saying. This will make the communication more effective.

**Touch**- Touch is where individuals come into contact with other individuals **(Oxford English Dictionaries).** I made sure that I used this skill very carefully, because I didn’t want this skill being used inappropriately. To do this I made sure that I only touched the child if needed to. For example, I used this skill when the children were holding their fingers up. I touched their fingers to help them count how many they had up. This demonstrates that I used touch effectively and appropriately as this benefitted the children’s learning in maths. Throughput the group interaction I made sure that I didn’t enter the children’s personal space. I only done this if I needed to help them through maths methods. When I touched the child to help them count I made sure that I was gentle and professional about it. The observer marked 1 (being excellent) as my rating score for touch and they said that they couldn’t criticise me as I carried this skill out to the best of my ability.

Overall, I believe that I used my nonverbal communication in the group interaction to the best of my ability because the children had great understanding of what I was saying as well as my intensions of the interaction. The observer picked up on all the skills I used when communicating with the children and said I used nonverbal elements of communication throughout the interaction. It is evident that my nonverbal communication was very effective because the observer marked 1 (being excellent) for each skill. This demonstrates that problems didn’t occur during the interaction and that the children understood the activity that I was giving them to do.

***Verbal Communication***

***Avoiding Jargon-*** *Jargon is specific words or phrases that a certain group of people (for example, professionals) use in a workplace.* ***(Cambridge dictionary)***

*I had to make sure that I avoided using jargon when doing the group interaction with the children in year 1. If I used jargon, the children would not understand a word I would have been saying to them. To prevent this barrier to communication, I used language that the children would understand. By not using jargon made the interaction clearer when me and the children where communicating to one another. The specific language I used with the teachers where totally different from the chosen language I used with the children throughout the interaction. The observer picked up on this and commented “the children understood what you were saying to them because you didn’t use difficult words”. This demonstrates that I used this skill to the best of my ability and it shows that my group interaction had good qualities. The observer marked 1 (being excellent) as my rating score for avoiding jargon.*

***Avoiding Slang****- During my group interaction, I knew if I used slang it could have caused major barriers to mine and the children’s communication. With knowing this, I made sure that I avoided using slang throughout the interaction because I knew that the children would understood what I was saying more. Also, if I used slang it wouldn’t have been effective in the interaction because my language wouldn’t have been clear to the children. The language I use with my friends was different from the words and phrases I chose to use with the children. This is because the children don’t understand who I am and know me well so I made sure that I didn’t use slang to them because it would have confused them. The observer marked 1 (being excellent) as my rating score for avoiding slang. This demonstrates that I used this skill correctly and prevented using slang in the interaction. Next time I do a group interaction., I will make sure that I continue not to use slang because it is very professional to not use it in a health and social related care setting.*

***Clear speech****- Clear Speech Is a technique that people used to present their words and phrases in a precise, accurate and fully formed manor* ***(careisthere.com).*** *Throughout the interaction, I made sure that I used this skill effectively by making sure my words where clear and loud enough for the children to understand. I made sure that I was not talking to loud or too quiet and to make sure I wasn’t I asked the children if they could hear me okay. This gave me and the children an advantage when learning because there was clear communication throughout the group interaction. If clear speech was not presented throughout the interaction, it would have caused huge barriers to mine and the children’s communication. I knew that I had to prevent this from happening, therefore, I made sure that my words where clear. The observer marked 1 (being excellent0 as my rating score for clear speech.*

***Listening skills***

***Using reflective listening****- I made sure that I was actively listening to what each child was saying. I done this because it is very respectful. Also, if a child was struggling and got an answer wrong, I would listen to them and correct their mistakes. This gave the children great advantages to understand methods to get the answer right. I believe I listened effectively to the children because I took into consideration the child’s abilities, thoughts and feelings. I reflected back on the work I carried out in the interaction, and it was evident that I listened effectively to all the children because they understood the task in the end because I helped them with their corrections. Also, the observer picked up on my listening skills and commented that I was completely focused in helping the children out in the interaction.*

***Having an appropriate attitude and valuing the other person***

*The group interaction took place in a primary school setting. I made it a priority that I had a positive attitude and outlook during the group interaction with the four children. This was because I wanted the children to see that I was motivated and excited to do an activity with them. Also, I used this behaviour so the children would imitate it and be enthusiastic about the work. I had a positive attitude throughout the interaction to set a good example to the children. This is because I didn’t want a child having a bad attitude with me or the other children. I believe I used this skill to the best of my ability and also, the observer said that I was calm and pleasant with the child in the interaction. By having a calm, pleasant attitude with the children showed that I had great patience and understanding with each child. Next time, I will show that I valued them more because I believed that it wasn’t presented to them much in the group interaction.*

***A willingness to build an understanding of the other persons/ views/ turn taking***

*During the interaction, I had to understand what the children were thinking because they all had different views of the work they were undertaking. With their being different views of the work, I made sure that I listened and spent time with each individual to come up with the correct method to suit their abilities. This demonstrates that I was willing to understand each child’s preferred method when learning maths. I made sure that I understood what the children were saying and why they had them thoughts. This showed the children that I was willing to listen to what they were saying. By doing this throughout the interaction gave it great qualities.*

*I made sure that individuals in the group took turns to communicate because if everyone was talking at once, it would have caused huge barriers to the children’s learning. I made sure that I did not interrupt what the children where saying because if I did, it would have been very disrespectful. Also, I made sure that each child had the opportunity to use the marbles to help them understand how to add and subtract. By doing this I gave the children equal opportunities to develop their knowledge. If I avoided this, it could have caused conflict because the children might not have shared properly. This demonstrates that taking turns was present in the group interaction. Next time I do a group interaction; I will use more activities that involve taking turns.*

***Encouragement****-*

*Encouragement is words or behaviour that give someone confidence/ motivation to do something* ***(Cambridge dictionary).***

*Before the group interaction started I knew that I would try my best to motivate the children so they would enjoy the activity I was about to do with them. To do this I used open questions to get the children more involved and excited about the work I was about to do with them. An example of a open question I used was “what do you like about maths the best”. I used this to get ideas of how to make maths more enjoyable for the children. When they answered the question, I got useful responses because I had the equipment they liked to use which helps them understand how to add and subtract numbers. Open questions gave me more detailed information about them than what closed questions would. I made sure that I was fully aware of the children’s views and opinions about maths and motivated them to like and understand it. I told them that maths can be fun and demonstrated it through the activity I chose to do. I wanted the child to elaborate their thought and feelings so I could understand their views and help them in any way I could. This made the interaction have good qualities because I built close bonds with the children by understanding their opinions.*

*I made sure that I understood each child’s ability when learning maths. By actively listening to the children showed that I respected them and was willing to help them. I was warm and considerate about their abilities because I didn’t get frustrated when the children got questions wrong. Everything the children were saying to me, I responded clearly and to the best of my ability. This demonstrates that I wanted to benefit their knowledge and respected what they had to say. I believe I was warm and respectful throughout the group interaction and the observer also picked up on this. Also, throughout the interaction, I made sure that the words I chose was effective to each child. I was very empathetic because I was showing great understanding and listened to all of the children who took part in the interaction. I picked up on the children’s feelings towards the task and helped them throughout the activity. This gave the children confidence and reassurance. With knowing the children’s abilities, allowed me to be empathetic because I really wanted to understand and help them as much as I possibly could.*

***Appropriate Communication for the occasion-***

*During my group interaction I made sure that my chosen language was effective for the children. This demonstrates that I couldn’t use difficult words that would have confused the children. This demonstrates that I couldn’t use a specific language that professionals use because the children would not know what I was saying to them. If I showed high level of formality, it would have caused huge barriers to mine and the children’s communication. This implies that I took into consideration that the children were only in year 1. The chosen language I used to communicate with the children was age appropriate. This demonstrates that I prevented using harsh, difficult words that would have caused confusion and frustration to the children. By doing this, it gave the interaction great qualities because there was significance in understanding throughout the interaction. The observer in the interaction said “the language I used was understandable and was not confusing for the children.*

*I showed the children that I was warm and respectful towards them because I didn’t get irritated or annoyed when they were answering questions wrong. Instead I respected that they had learning disabilities, so I wanted to help them even more understand what they had to do. If a child got stuck on an equation, I helped them find a method they preferred to get the correct answer. I made sure that I helped all the children in the group interaction. The methods I revealed to the children really helped them and they got the right answer. This demonstrates that the interaction had great qualities. I also maintained confidentiality throughout the day in Moss Croft Primary School and throughout the group interaction. I made sure that I didn’t discuss the children I worked with other pupils in the lesson. Also, I didn’t reveal personal information to anyone about the child. This demonstrates that I respected the children and was being professional in the work place. This gave the interaction great qualities.*

*Assertiveness is when someone behaves confidently and is not frightened to say what they think* ***(Cambridge dictionary).*** *When I presented the task to the group I done this in a confident way because I showed the children that I knew what I was doing. Also, I hoped that this behaviour and attitude was imitated by the children because wanted them to be confident in their work. Also, when the children were asking questions, I answered them confidently. This gave the interaction great qualities because it showed the children that I was going to help them to the best of my ability.*

***Conclusion***

*When reflecting back on the activity I undertook with the group in Moss croft primary school, it showed me that I tried my very best to help the children understand maths equations as well as find their preferred method when solving a problem. This is validated by my work placement report because ether observer picked up on the skills I have carried out throughout the interaction. The main strengths of my interaction is that I was supportive and respected the children’s abilities. With the children having different abilities, I made it a priority to adapt to meet their needs. I used these skills to the best of my ability. My observer said that my group interaction was excellent and I have no criticism to go off. This 9s why she marked 19being excellent) for all the skills in the group interaction. I feel like I need to use more levels of formality. To do this next time I will do a group interaction with the teachers as my formality levels will be higher. This will allow me to pick up on important information as well as increase my knowledge of this skill.*

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