Cognitive Development in the First Two Years: Sensorimotor Intelligence

The first two years of life encompass the **sensorimotor stage** of cognitive development, as proposed by Jean Piaget. During this period, infants acquire knowledge through sensory experiences and motor activities. The sensorimotor stage is divided into six substages, each representing a progression in the infant's cognitive abilities.

Primary Circular Reactions: Substages One and Two

In **Substage One (Reflexes)**, spanning from birth to approximately one month, infants' behaviors are dominated by innate reflexes such as sucking, grasping, and staring. These reflexes serve as the foundation for future cognitive development.

Substage Two (Primary Circular Reactions) occurs between one to four months of age. During this phase, infants begin to coordinate their reflexes and engage in repetitive actions centered on their own bodies that initially occurred by chance but are then repeated for the pleasure they bring. For example, an infant might accidentally suck their thumb and find it pleasurable, leading them to engage in thumb-sucking repeatedly.

Secondary Circular Reactions: Substages Three and Four

From four to eight months, infants enter **Substage Three (Secondary Circular Reactions)**. In this stage, they become more object-oriented, moving beyond self-preoccupation, and begin to repeat actions that bring interesting or pleasurable results in their environment. For instance, an infant might shake a rattle to hear the sound it produces.

Between eight to twelve months, infants progress to **Substage Four (Coordination of Secondary Circular Reactions)**. Here, they start to show intentionality by combining previously learned schemes to achieve specific goals. For example, an infant might push a toy aside to reach another toy underneath, demonstrating goal-directed behavior.

Application of Piaget’s Theory in Child Observation and Curriculum Planning

Understanding Piaget’s theory of cognitive development enhances my ability to observe and analyze children's behaviors effectively. It provides insights into how children develop their cognitive and motor skills. This knowledge is instrumental in identifying typical behaviors and recognizing any developmental concerns, including nutritional issues, malnutrition, obesity, and the needs of children with special requirements. I intend to apply this understanding to design an appropriate curriculum that supports the cognitive development of children in a child development program.