

Compare piaget and vygotsky

Profession



Cognitive development is the term used to describe the construction of thought process, including remembering, problem solving and decision-making, from childhood through adolescence to adulthood. In this essay I will compare and contrast the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky, both of which were enormously significant contributors to the cognitive development component to/in psychology. In addition to this I will also weigh up the strengths and weaknesses of each theory and outline how they can be applied to an educational setting.

At the centre of Piaget's theory is the principle that cognitive development occurs in a series of four distinct, universal stages, each characterized by increasingly sophisticated and abstract levels of thought. He believed that these stages always occur in the same order, each builds on what was learned in the previous stage and that the development resulted from two influences: maturation and interaction with environment. Although Vygotsky's theory works along similar lines to Piaget - the belief that children were active in their learning.

He focused more on the importance of social interaction and language and how they both play a fundamental influence on children's development of understanding. Although both psychologists acknowledged that all children go through stages, they were distinguished by different styles of thinking, and approach to analysing the cognitive development process. The stages were the centre of Piaget's theory while Vygotsky only acknowledged them in his theory. Piaget's theory unlike Vygotsky, generalized children into age groups and ranked their abilities accordingly.

For example: Piaget believed that all children that reach The concrete Operational stage (ages 7-11) have overcome centration and become decentred, they are capable of mastering the principles of classification, seriation and class inclusion. However, Vygotsky maintained the concept that if a child follows the adult's example he will gradually develop the ability to do certain tasks without help or assistance. He called the difference between what a child can do with help and what he or she can do without guidance the " zone of proximal development" (ZPD).

As a result of this different approach to children, we can relate this to the reason why unlike Piaget, Vygotsky acknowledged the issue of Special Educational needs and how some children might be of the same age as their peers but find it difficult to complete the same tasks cause of other issues. Vygotsky believed that learning leads to development and that “ Pushing” the child as such was to be encouraged in order to develop the potential the child can reach. On the other hand, Piaget’s theory was based on biological maturation, an understanding that intelligence is gained as a process that is developed over time.

Both psychologists believed that interaction was the key to the development of the child. However, they both focused on a different interaction. Piaget acknowledged the importance of the child’s interaction with the environment whilst Vygotsky on the other hand stressed the importance of social interaction and of having someone who knows more than the child and who can help the child learn something that would be too difficult to do alone. Piaget saw the child as a scientist, he learnt things in solitary on his own,

while Vygotsky saw the child as an apprentice because he learnt as a result of social collaboration.

Consequently, the way that they viewed the role of the teacher in a child's life differed. Piaget believed that the teacher was the facilitator, the one that provides the interaction in the environment. As opposed to Vygotsky's belief that the teacher is the expert that provides the scaffolding support to children as they are learning new things. In addition to this Vygotsky believed that language was crucial for the cognitive development. He believed that the greatest advantage in development comes when we get to the stage of being able to internalise language.

One of the biggest differences between these theories was that Vygotsky was able to put his theories into practice in a school setting. Unlike Piaget, who was of an academic background and didn't apply his theories. Never the less, they both theories influenced education and emphasised the importance of assessment however Vygotsky wanted the observation of children and their abilities to be as valued as test scores. Most of the criticism of Piaget's work is in regards to his research methods. A major source of his inspiration for the theory was based on his observations of his own children.

And because of this small sample group, people believe that it is difficult and incorrect to generalise his findings to a larger population. Similarly, many psychologists believe that Piaget underestimated the age which children could accomplish certain tasks and that sometimes children understand a concept before they are able to demonstrate their understanding of it. For example, children in the Sensorimotor stage may not search for a hidden

object because their motor skills are not developed, rather than because they lack object permanence. This has been supported by evidence from Bower & Wishart (1972).

They found that the way that an object is made to disappear influences the child's response. As well as this, Piaget's theory has been said to overestimate that every child and adult reaches the formal operational stage of knowledge development. Dasen (1994) claims that only a third of adults ever reach this stage. The lack of empirical support in regards to Piaget's suggestion that the cognitive development is built from the conflict that endures by placing the child in a state of disequilibrium was criticised by other psychologists. For example, Inhelder et al. (1974) showed that children learn better in situations of mild conflict. Also, Piaget focused on children's mistakes and thus may have overlooked important mental abilities of the children by focusing on in what connection did they make their error during the task. Although Piaget's theory has quite a lot of criticism, he will always be known as one of the most influential psychologists. His theory is known to have had a great contribution to education and has provided a starting point for other psychologist's research which has helped us develop and understand the cognitive development.

When compared with Piaget's theory, a major weakness to Vygotsky's theory is that there is little empirical research relation to it. This is probably due to his early death and because the theory focuses on the process of the cognitive development and not of the outcomes like Piaget's. In addition to this, many psychologists believe that vygotsky might have over emphasised the influence that social interaction on children's learning capabilities.

<https://assignbuster.com/compare-piaget-and-vygotsky/>

However on the other hand, it is said that he underemphasized the biological and individual factors of the cognitive development.

Vygotsky encouraged being aware of the children potential and how with the proper assistance or support from an adult or a peer with more knowledge the child is capable of learning more. Through this simple observation he gave it the term of “ Zone of Proximal Development” . Hughs (1975) and Donaldson (1978) proved this by demonstrated that the same tasks that Piaget set for the children can be made understandable by making them more child friendly by providing a familiar social atmosphere.

The practical application of the ideas presented by both Piaget’s and Vygotsky’s theories in a classroom could help a classroom run more smoothly by providing the teacher with different teaching methods. A teacher following Piaget's theories would be likely to group children of similar levels of development together. The teacher would encourage abstract thought during discussions, and be certain to build on previous information that the students had been given.

However, when testing the skills and knowledge of the students, the teacher would be more likely to use questions that evoked concrete answers such as true or false questions. The teacher would be more likely to go over past information add new information, assign individual assignments, and then test the students' knowledge on the subject. On the other hand, a teacher following Vygotsky's theories would be more likely to form groups of diverse students with different skill levels and different levels of knowledge, possibly even setting up tutors for slower students.

The teacher would be more likely to assign group projects and give the students problems to solve, as opposed to asking questions that can be answered with a concrete answer. In addition to this, the teacher should attempt to create a lesson that would incorporate all three stages of learning by providing the information to the students, allowing diverse groups to work together and then assigning an individual task that tests the students' ability to think through the information and problem on their own. Which would help prove that with the help they received before they were able of doing the next task by themselves. Although both theories can be applied to an educational setting, their implications on a classroom would arise in different manners. By only applying Piaget's theory in a classroom, for example grouping children of similar levels of development would produce a group of smart children and a group of less capable children. In doing this, the classroom could become a place where the less capable children would be known as underachievers and taunted by the more academical children.

Similarly, only applying Vygotsky's theory in an educational, for example, by forming groups of diverse students with different skill levels and different levels of knowledge together, only applying Vygotsky's theory in an educational, the able children will always be assisting the less able and it may hinder their abilities to learn. In conclusion, I think that both Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories offer different insight into how children learn and that maybe by combining the different ideas from both of them would help in building a good teaching classroom.