

# Piagets stages of cognitive development



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There were many great ideas that came from the minds of pioneers, theorists and current thinkers that range from, corporal punishment to healthy settings, playing areas and timings. The key concept I will be focusing on will be “ Piaget’s Stages of Cognitive Development”. This concept had four different stages to it; the Sensorimotor Stage (0-2 years), Pre-Operational Stage (2-7 years), Concrete Operational Stage (7+ years) and the Formal Operational Stage (11+ years) and was instrumental for many school structures across the World including the national curriculum in the UK. Piaget himself was a great theorist, and had many other great ideas, but I believe this key concept was the one that made the biggest impact on the practice of education and children’s settings.

Piaget’s Stages of Cognitive Development had four stages and they were; the Sensorimotor Stage (0-2 years), Pre-Operational Stage (2-7 years), Concrete Operational Stage (7+ years) and the Formal Operational Stage (11+ years).

The Sensorimotor Stage is where the child starts to go, through physical interaction with their environment and they start to build a set of concepts about reality and how it works. In this stage the child doesn’t know about object permanence, the understanding that objects continue to exist even when they cannot be seen, heard, or touched.

The Pre-Operational Stage is where he child is not yet able to develop theoretically and needs to see solid and existing physical situations.

The Concrete Operational Stage is physical experience that accumulate, and the child starts to learn and remember which creates logical thoughts in their

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mind that the child's experiences. Some sort of problem solving is also possible at this stage, such as counting how many objects are on the table.

Formal Operational Stage is where the child's cognitive structures are similar to an adult's and they will start to understand people's feelings and therefore become less egotistical

Piaget's idea on cognitive development had a huge impact on education today, and even though this concept was not specifically intended to apply to education, many educational structures, including the national curriculum in the UK are built upon the theory that children should be taught at the level for which they are mentally prepared for. This is because he believed that the child cannot be forced to move on to each stage as they have to be psychologically ready to move on to the next step of the ladder, but he also gave guidelines to which age the children should move onto each stage. The idea of this has led to a number of new strategies to combat the mentally challenged children and one's who are struggling. These strategies include providing a supportive environment, one-on-one assistance in the classroom, reduced assignments, step-by-step instructions etc.

Piaget was of the belief that the curriculum needed to be developed so it took into account the age and the ability of the child. He also believed that curricula needed to be flexible to allow for variations in ability of different students of the same age, for example those who weren't mentally ready for the next stage. In Britain the National Curriculum and Key Stages are very similar to " Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development", and this goes to show what sort of a legacy Jean Piaget had on education practice.

However there are some people who doubt Piaget and his key concept and this is because most of the research that Piaget did was observations from his own children, not from children in a nursery or a school, and this has led to much-maligned criticism as to how credible and reliable his work actually is. In addition to this, the other children in Piaget's small research sample all came from reasonably rich and upper-class families, so he didn't actually research children from all different backgrounds therefore, because of the unrepresentative sample it doesn't actually represent the whole or even the vast majority of the child population, that come from differing backgrounds.

According to Piaget, children are very egocentric in the sensori-motor and preoperational stages. This means that Piaget believes group activities would not be not very useful for children, as they won't be able to work together very well. However, Smith et al (1998), disagrees with that and believes that many children develop much earlier than Piaget said they do and doing group work would actually be beneficial for the children. Many other researchers seem to come to the same conclusion as say that children possess many of the traits sooner than Piaget actually believed and recent research on theory of mind has backed this theory up. One example of this is, is that children from the age of 4 to 5 have a very good and underestimated level of understanding of the perspective of another human being and therefore they know if they hurt their feelings. This means that the children are a lot less selfish than Piaget gave them credit for.

In conclusion it is clear to see how much of an impact Piaget has had on society, education and the educational structure in particular. Through the use of " Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development" it has given clear

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guidelines for how to deal with children at each age until they get to 11. As the national curriculum is based on the guidelines of this key concept it shows how credible this theory really is. What I believe is good about the theory, is that it not a rigid format, as it allows for exceptions for example if a child has learning issues they will therefore not be able to move onto each stage at the age Piaget said, then the child will be held back a year until they are ready to move on to the next stage. However Piaget would've lost some credibility because his research methods were a bit lacking as he didn't look at a range of families, just families from a specific background, and he will therefore not have got complete results that reflect the whole population. But overall, apart from his research methods, the concept is a fantastic idea and that has been reflected by the introduction of the national curriculum in the UK and other curriculums across the World.