

# How current theories of play can inform practice



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

K3D210- How current theories of play can inform practice There are many theories into how children develop and how they learn. These are extremely important as they can be applied to modern strategies used for child behaviours. Presently, learning theories are placed into 3 categories: Behaviourist approaches – children learn as a result of what they see and what happens to them. Constructivist approaches – children learn actively rather than passively. Information processing- children learn cognitively. There have been many theorists who have opposing views on how and why children behave and how they learn.

I will discuss 4 theorists, their theories and how they have influenced and shaped work with children. JEAN PIAGET was born in Switzerland. He was a zoologist before developing an interest in philosophy, in particular the branch of philosophy concerned with knowledge – ‘ epistemology’. He studied clinical psychology at a Paris university and pursued his interest in philosophy further. While in Paris, Piaget worked on the standardization of intelligence tests. His role was to record the correct responses of children but during this time he became much more interested in the mistakes that children made.

Piaget came to believe that by studying children’s errors it could provide an insight into their cognitive processes. Piaget conducted many studies over many years and believed the best way to study children was in their natural environments. Piaget even studied his own children to make detailed observations and gradually developed a theory that was to become very influential. His theory of learning is often referred to as a ‘ Constructivist

approach'. This is due to his belief that children constructed or built up their thoughts according to their experiences of the world around them.

Piaget felt that learning was an ongoing process and children would adapt their original ideas if a new piece of information seemed to contradict their conclusions. For example, a group of toddlers may come to believe that milk is served from a green beaker, this is due to the fact that it has always been served this way. If one day they are served water instead of milk from the green beaker then the toddlers will have to reconsider their original conclusions regarding the green beaker. Piaget used specific vocabulary to describe the process of children learning in this way:

The child constructs a theory (schema). EQUILIBRIUM. The child's experiences to date seem to fit the schema (everything balances).

DISEQUILIBRIUM. An experience occurs that casts doubt on the effectiveness of the schema (things don't add up any more). ACCOMMODATION. The child changes the original schema to fit the new piece of experience or information. After many years of study Piaget believed that children develop schemas based on their direct experiences. This helps us to understand why children's thinking can be different to our own. As children's experiences broaden so does the development of their thinking.