

Is child development
best described as a
gradual change



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Child development refers to the changes (biological, psychological, cognitive, social and emotional...) that take place in human beings from the time of conception till the end of adolescence. The genes (nature) and the environment (nurture) are argued to be the two ideas involved when referring to child developmental changes. Theories on child development vary from theorist to theorist. Child development is either described as continuous process or a discontinuous series of stages.

Freud summarised the child's psychological development into three stages; in the first phase the infant will be governed by the 'pleasure principle' (what feels good, is good!). The infant is driven by the wish to secure pleasure and avoid pain. During this phase the child is unable to differentiate between the ego (cognitive capacities) and the id (sexual aggressive instinctual drives). The second stage is where the child is able to differentiate the ego from the id while the third one is represented by the super ego whereby the child is mentally guided by himself (Freud, 1905, 1914, 1920, 1923, 1926). He divided his psychosexual (polymorphous perverse) theory into five parts. These are oral, anal, phallic/ oedipal, latency and finally genital. (Freud 1905)

Jean Piaget, a Swiss theorist, assumed that children learn through actively constructing knowledge (with reference to his constructivist theory, Piaget stated that infants create a schemata through experience). He studied the growth of infants, including a profound reflection on his own three children. The latter then came to divide the stages of child development into four important stages namely sensorimotor (0-2 years), pre-operational (2-6 years), concrete operational (6-12 years) and formal operational (12 years +).

<https://assignbuster.com/is-child-development-best-described-as-a-gradual-change/>

He characterised each stage with a particular type of cognitive schemata. Sensorimotor is the first stage of cognitive development during which infants build an understanding of the world through the senses (like sucking, looking, grasping which will help the child to think). This stage is followed by the pre- operational stage whereby there is the development of thought and language but from an egocentric perspective, this does not mean that the child is selfish, it rather mean that they do not have the mental ability to understand that other people may have different opinions and beliefs from themselves. The third stage is known as concrete operational; at this particular stage Piaget noticed that the child's thinking becomes more logical and finally the child reaches the formal operation stage which reflects an increase in the adolescent ability, at this point the latter will be able to solve problems in a more systematic way. Piaget describes someone who is fully developed as someone who is capable of logical reasoning.

New measures of experimenting on infants have also produced results which challenge many of Piaget's findings. The work of Baillargeon, for example, has demonstrated object permanence in infants as young as five months (Baillargeon 1986). Another significant challenge to Piaget's ideas comes from those who place emphasis on the child's social world as a major contribution to development. This emphasis stems largely from the work of a Russian psychologist, Vygotsky. He agreed with Piaget that the child is an ' active constructor' of his own knowledge. However, there, the similarity between the two theorists ends, since the core of the Vygotsky theory was founded on the belief that we can only understand children's mental growth if we take account of the social context in which they develop. According to

Vygotsky a child's parents, friends and teachers are key players in the process of development. He also highlighted that Piaget ignored the complex link between the individual, interpersonal and social domains. (Although Piaget recognised that the child environment is important, he attached more significance to the child's physical world rather than the social one). This is surprising given that the human infant is dependent upon others during the first period of their life which Piaget termed the sensorimotor period.

Vygotsky's theory redresses this imbalance.

Vygotskian theory is a type of instruction called scaffolding (Wood et al ; 1976; Rogoff 1990), where the amount and form of guidance given to a child is adjusted accordingly to his level of development and eventually reduced until the child's works independently. This idea has been modified as this relationship is now seen as a two way process. The current view is that the child is an active partner when working with an adult, contributing to even structuring the interaction. Educators now believe that group learning or peer tutoring can offer an effective environment for guiding a child through their zone of proximal development (see Richards and Light, 1986)

Bandura on his side argued that children learned by observing and imitating others. He put forward the idea of social learning theory (Bandura, 1989 along with Skinner, 1953). Both of them see development as a continuous reciprocal interactions between the individual behaviour and the environment

The theories suggested above may appear to differ in many ways but in the end, it is moreover the same ideas which are being developed but from

<https://assignbuster.com/is-child-development-best-described-as-a-gradual-change/>

different point of views. Some suggest that in child development, change is a continuous process in which children accumulate skills, knowledge and behaviours and on the other hand the transition to adulthood proceeds through a series of qualitative stages in thought and behaviour. After taking into account the theories, child development can be best described as both a series of stages and a gradual change concept (Berk, 2009). To conclude we cannot say that development is characterized as a single line of change.

-