



A Review of Cognitive Development: The Theory of Jean Piaget

Dr. Ravinder Lather, Professor, Haryana College of Education Kinana

Abstract

Jean Piaget, a Swiss psychologist was particularly concerned with the way thinking develops in children from birth till they become young adults. To understand the nature of this development, Piaget carefully observed the behaviour of his own three kids. He used to present problems to them, observe responses slightly after the situations and again observe their responses. Piaget called this method of exploring development clinical interview. Piaget believed

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that humans also adapt to their physical and social environments in which they live. The process of adaptation begins since birth. Piaget saw this adaptation in terms of two basic processes: Assimilation and Accommodation. Assimilation. It refers to the process by which new objects and events are grasped or incorporated within the scope of existing schemes or structures. Accommodation. It is the process through which the existing schemes or structure is modified to meet the resistance to straightforward grasping or assimilation of a new object or event.

Key word: Piaget, development, Cognition etc.

Introduction

Cognition refers to thinking and memory processes, and cognitive development refers to long-term changes in these processes. One of the most widely known perspectives about cognitive development is the cognitive stage theory of a Swiss psychologist named Jean Piaget. Piaget created and studied an account of how children and youth gradually become able to think logically and scientifically.

Piaget was a psychological constructivist: in his view, learning proceeded by the interplay of assimilation (adjusting new experiences to fit prior concepts) and accommodation (adjusting concepts to fit new experiences). The to-and-fro of these two processes leads not only to short-term learning, but also to long-term developmental change. The long-term developments are really the main focus of Piaget's cognitive theory.

After observing children closely, Piaget proposed that cognition developed through distinct stages from birth through the end of adolescence. By stages he meant a sequence of thinking patterns with four key features:

1. They always happen in the same order.
2. No stage is ever skipped.
3. Each stage is a significant transformation of the stage before it.
4. Each later stage incorporated the earlier stages into itself.

Basically this is the “staircase” model of development mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Piaget proposed four major stages of cognitive development, and called them (1) sensor motor intelligence, (2) preoperational thinking, (3) concrete operational thinking, and (4) formal operational thinking. Each stage is correlated with an age period of childhood, but only approximately.

The sensor motor stage: birth to age 2

In Piaget's theory, the sensor motor stage is first, and is defined as the period when infants “think” by means of their senses and motor actions. As every new parent will attest, infants continually touch, manipulate, look, listen to, and even bite and chew objects. According to Piaget, these actions allow them to learn about the world and are crucial to their early cognitive development.

The infant's actions allow the child to represent (or construct simple concepts of) objects and events. A toy animal may be just a confusing array of sensations at first, but by looking, feeling, and manipulating it repeatedly, the child gradually organizes her sensations and actions into a stable