
LEARNING GUIDE

**PIAGET'S
DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY:
AN OVERVIEW**

Narration By

DAVID ELKIND, Ph.D.

(25 Minutes)



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INTRODUCTION

The work of Jean Piaget has become the foundation of current developmental psychology and the basis for changes in educational practice. David Elkind explores the roots of Piaget's work and outlines important vocabulary and concepts that structure much of the study of child development.

Using both archival footage of Dr. Piaget and newly shot footage of interviews with children of varying ages, this film presents an overview of Piaget's developmental theory, its scope, and content. For this film, Piaget's life is divided into four periods.

Jean Piaget was born in 1896 in Neuchatel, Switzerland and died in 1980.

FIRST PERIOD – EARLY TO LATE 1920's

- Studied children's language, conception of physical world and evolution of moral judgments.
 - Found children to be egocentric in their thinking.
 - Developed the semi-clinical interview.
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SECOND PERIOD – LATE 1920's TO EARLY 1930's

- Looked closely at the development of intelligence in infancy and early childhood.
 - Developed ingenious non-verbal tests to explore young children's conceptions of reality.
 - Saw children constructing reality through the processes of assimilation and accommodation, creating conservations.
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THIRD PERIOD – LATE 1930's TO THE 1960's

- Introduced a logical model to describe the course of mental development
- Sensorimotor stage: first two years of life. Children established constants (conservations) through physical explorations of their environment.
- Pre-operational stage: From about age two to six or seven. The child reconstructs the world at a symbolic level with language.
- Concrete operational stage: From about six or seven to about eleven or twelve. Child again reconstructs the world on the basis of rules, classes, numbers, and relations.
- Formal Operations stage: From about eleven or twelve. Child starts to deal with abstractions and how things might be but are not.

FOURTH PERIOD – 1960's THROUGH DEATH IN 1980

- Looked at memory and imagery.

IMPORTANCE OF WORK

- Intelligence develops in a series of age related stages that cannot be hurried.
- Knowledge is always a construction. It always involves both the mental activity of the child and information from the environment.

Transcript of subtitles for French sections

INTRODUCTION

“We can classify education into two main categories: passive education relying primarily on memory, and active education relying on intelligent understanding and discovery. Our real problem is what is the goal of education? Are we forming children who are only capable of learning what is already known? Or should we try to develop creative and innovative minds capable of discovery from the preschool age on through life?”

CLOSING

“Since we cannot distinguish ‘true’ from ‘false’ by the content of a memory, it follows that every memory contains an element of reconstruction of the past. The activity of memory is usually presented in terms of code: coding and decoding. When an event is perceived, as I perceive this auditorium, a number of perceptions are recorded in code form. Later on when I think of you in my memory, there is a decoding. The code permits us to organize a memory from the moment it is recorded until it is evoked.”

“Dr. Inhelder and I posed this problem: Is the code of memory invariant? Is it the same at all ages, the same for preschool children as for ten to fifteen year-olds? Or, does the code itself, change? Our hypothesis is that the code of memory depends on intelligence, on the child’s operational level. The code changes from one level to another. It improves, becomes more structured, according to the process of the child’s intelligence.”

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