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Major Players

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EDU: 324 History of American Education

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## Major Players

Education reform is an important part of our education system. Techniques and theories always need to change because times change, and what students need to know change. One reformer who I think did a lot for education was Jean Piaget. While Piaget's contributions were not directly related to education, he was a psychologist who was concerned with how people, specifically children, learned.

Piaget started looking at how children learned because he was interested in why young children would give wrong answers to questions and be so adamant about defending their answers. He started studying children at different ages and came up with a theory about development. His theory is called Piaget's Cognitive Theory. He believed that children's minds develop through stages. Each stage corresponds with the child's age. At each stage there are certain milestones that need to be met in order to move onto the next stage. Once they have moved to the next stage they use what they have learned to acquire new information, and form it into new ideas. "At each stage the child must reconstruct and integrate concepts formed at previous stages. According to Piaget's theory of readiness, children should not be introduced to new concepts until they have reached the appropriate stage of cognitive development" (Webb, 2014, sec 7.8, para 29). Each stage is vital for growth and learning.

There are four different stages of Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory. The first stage is Sensorimotor from birth to age two, the primary goal is to gain object permanence. Before gaining object permanence a child will think that if they cannot see something that it does not exist. The second stage is Preoperational from two years to seven years old. The primary goal in this stage is egocentrism and to use the imagination. Children in this stage are working on developing empathy, and think that everyone else sees the world as they do, they also tend to

think of inanimate objects as being alive. The third stage is Concrete Operational from seven to eleven years old. In this stage the primary goal is conservation and thinking logically. Children will learn that “conservation is the ability to understand that redistributing material does not affect its mass, number or volume” (McLeod, 2010, para 5). The last stage is Formal Operational from eleven years and on. In this stage people can think abstractly and logically.

Piaget’s theory is important to education because it revealed that children were unable to perform certain tasks until they were ready.

Because Piaget's theory is based upon biological maturation and stages the notion of 'readiness' is important. Readiness concerns when certain information or concepts should be taught. According to Piaget's theory children should not be taught certain concepts until they have reached the appropriate stage of cognitive development (McLeod, 2012, para 39).

It becomes important in education because children of a certain age are either ready or not ready to learn certain material. A child at the age of five will not be able to grasp a concept like psychology, it would not be until at least age eleven that this would become understandable. Children learn best by doing a task rather than being told about it, so if a child is not in the proper stage they are not going to learn the task. By knowing how children of certain ages think, it becomes easier to know what concepts are appropriate for them.

Piaget was a psychologist and was concerned with why children of different ages were able to grasp certain concepts. He came up with Piaget’s Cognitive theory. This theory says that there are four stages in which children need to learn certain things. These stages correspond to

their ages. Piaget contributed to the education system by showing that children are able to gain a certain kind of knowledge based off of their stage and age.

## References

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