

Piaget's Theory for Teaching

Piaget's theories in regards to teaching were interesting, in my opinion, because his observations and theories were made in the late thirties; However, his idea of the classroom being a more student centered environment and less that of a lecture-ridden one is very prevalent today. Patricia Webb states five issues that arose from Piaget in regards to his implications for teaching, which are stage-based teaching, uniqueness of individual learning, conceptual development prior to language, experience involving action, and necessity of social interaction. In doing so, she discusses how these issues assist in a teacher's awareness of students' learning abilities and better methods for success.

With the issue of stage-based teaching (teaching based upon Piaget's four stages of cognitive development), the learners struggle when there is only an abundance of verbal instruction, because this results in little transfer. This basically means what we know, based on numerous studies, that lecturing alone will not result in student success. What a student processes and retains depends on the skills he already possessed. A teacher can't assume that all students will learn at the same rate, and they cannot be forced to excel if they aren't developmentally ready. This filters into the issue of the uniqueness of individual learning for students because learning relies on a learner's background knowledge or schema which leads a learner to believe that a new concept is too easy or too hard. Although a teacher may attempt to determine the difficulty of the material she gives a student, the learner's reception of this material may be accompanied by frustration or boredom. The learner's ability to process a new skill and apply new material as opposed to just memorizing for the sake of memorizing lies with this issue. Experience involving action is an issue that arises when teachers discard a learner's ability to learn from mistakes and incorrect answers. When this is done, learners aren't allowed to problem solve and develop the necessary skills to think critically. Teachers should allow time for students to learn in less structured environments or activities where the learners are able to achieve some success no matter the level. Last, but not least, the necessity of social interaction was a major issue due to learners' needs to learn from each other. Students do learn better from each other and in doing so they are sometimes able to reword a statement by the teacher so that other learners can better understand.