Your notes

GCSE Psychology: revision notes

Piaget's stage theory and education

Contents

1. Piaget's stage theory
2. Key ideas and studies
3. Piaget and education
4. Key terms
5. Quick questions
6. What to do next

Piaget's stage theory

- Piaget said children's thinking develops through four stages in a fixed order.
- Sensorimotor (0 to 2 years): learning through senses and actions; **object permanence** develops (knowing objects still exist when out of sight).
- Pre-operational (2 to 7 years): using symbols and language, but egocentric (unable to see things from another's view) and unable to conserve.
- Concrete operational (7 to 11 years): can conserve and think logically about concrete objects.
- Formal operational (11 years and over): can think abstractly and hypothetically.

Key ideas and studies

- **Conservation**: understanding that quantity stays the same when appearance changes, such as liquid poured into a taller glass.
- **Egocentrism** was tested with the three mountains task: young children chose their own view, not the doll's.
- Hughes' policeman doll study found children could take another's view at a younger age when the task made sense to them.
- McGarrigle and Donaldson's "Naughty Teddy" study found more young children could conserve when the change seemed accidental.

Piaget and education

- **Readiness**: children should be taught things when they are ready for their stage.
- **Discovery learning**: children learn best by exploring and doing.
- Evaluation: the theory has been very influential in education, but Piaget may have underestimated young children, as later studies showed.

Key terms

Object permanence	Knowing an object still exists when it can't be seen.
Egocentrism	Being unable to see things from another person's viewpoint.
Conservation	Understanding that quantity stays the same when appearance changes.
Readiness	The idea that children can only learn when they reach the right stage.
Discovery learning	Learning by exploring and doing.
Schema	A mental framework built from experience.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. Which is the first of Piaget's stages?
2. When does object permanence develop?
3. What is egocentrism?
4. Which task tested egocentrism?
5. At which stage can children conserve?
6. What can children do in the formal operational stage?
7. What did McGarrigle and Donaldson's Naughty Teddy study show?
8. What did Hughes' policeman doll study suggest?

Answers

1. Sensorimotor
2. In the sensorimotor stage
3. Being unable to see things from another person's viewpoint
4. The three mountains task
5. Concrete operational
6. Think abstractly and hypothetically
7. More young children could conserve when the change seemed accidental
8. Children can take another's view younger than Piaget thought

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 4 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

Free revision for GCSE and KS3 at lycolearn.co.uk. Some notes are for one exam board only, and say so in brackets.

Your notes