



Jean Piaget

Swiss Psychologist

1896-1980



Jean Piaget was an influential psychologist with a particular interest in child development, learning, and education. Although Piaget's early background was in biology, he studied natural sciences at the University of Neuchâtel, and for most of his career held positions there in sociology and psychology. Piaget chaired departments in psychology, and sociology at the University of Neuchâtel, University of Geneva, the International Bureau of Education (UNESCO), and University of Lausanne. He later created and directed (until his death) the International Center for Genetic Epistemology. His research in developmental psychology and genetic epistemology sought to answer the question of how knowledge develops within an individual. Piaget surmised from his studies of children that human knowledge is constructed through interactions with reality and that children's logic and modes of thinking are initially entirely different from those of adults. Piaget suggested that development is an orderly process that occurs in stages, and that developing children organize their experiences into schemes that help them understand the world. For example, during the sensorimotor stage (birth to age 2), young children develop hand-eye coordination schemes, and during the pre-operational stage (2 to age 7) they develop symbolic thought. His particular insight of the role of maturation in children's increasing capacity to understand their world has had particular influence in education and curriculum development.

Piaget's concept of how early infant's reactions (habits and circular reactions) provide a basis for cognitive and language development influenced Dr. Masgutova, as it provided a deeper understanding of developmental aspects of a reflex and its pattern. Her later clinical observations allowed her to differentiate the phases of reflex development (e.g., basic patterns vs. variant patterns). This finding enriched the MNRI Method with specialized correction procedures for poor or pathologically functioning reflexes depending on the age of an infant or child. Piaget demonstrated the process of development of the sucking response, in particular, as the neurophysiological and psychological basis for development and articulation and speech skills in a child. He also demonstrated how the tension of the mouth cavity muscles moderate to organize the pronunciation of the human sound and to construct speech. These findings led Dr. Masgutova to further clinical observations about the role of reflex maturation as the anatomical/physiological basis for cognitive development.

Credit and Further Reading:

A variety of Jean Piaget books are available through the Jean Piaget Society website:

<http://www.piaget.org/free-books.html>