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Developmental Psychology: Factors for Cognitive Development and Jean Piaget and Erikson's Theory for Competitive Exams

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Factors Influencing the Cognitive Development

- Long term memory and information processing or working memory are traits of the human infant which exist and operate much earlier than when one is aware of it; these are intact even before birth but these contents of memory are unknown to consciousness.
- The ability to control 'mental processes' and 'innate/inborn knowledge' develops after birth and this may occur largely due to the interaction of the child with the physical environment
- The child's interaction and bonding with the people around has a deep impact. Most often parents especially the mother, also including the caregivers/caretakers, are the most significant connections for the development of cognition.

Significant Influences on Cognition

Socio- Cultural Factor

- Given and debated in the early 1900s socio-cultural approach has now regained interest among cognitive scientists
- It states that cognitive ability does not start with the anatomy/biology of the individual or only with the environment: the culture and society into which the individual is born provide the most important resources/clues for human cognitive development.
- They provide the context into which the individual begins his experience of the world.
- Social groups help in person's cognitive development by placing value/importance on learning certain skills, thereby providing all important motivation that the person

needs and requires in order to learn and exhibit those skills or behaviors. This results in cognitive development

- One perspective about cognitive ability suggest that there is some sort of innate potential existing within an individual
- Another suggests that there is potential within the socio- cultural context for development of the individual.
- The individual is born into a society of potential intellect. Knowledge will develop largely based on the evolution of intellect within the society and culture.

Social Nature of Mind

- Beside other psychological functions, the most important and influential is the interaction between individuals.
- In the beginning, the child has no means of understanding/expressing or communicating his experiences. But as time passes, the teachings of parents and other family members enable a child to understand the world in which he lives.
- Knowledge is considered to be the experiences and the values that parents/caregivers pass on to their off springs. It reflects their particular social and cultural norms and standards, which are incorporated in their understanding of their culture.

Language and Cognitive Ability

- The main and most important tool in acquiring cognitions in any culture is its language through which an organized body of knowledge is transmitted as “cognitive abilities” . By learning the language, the child is able to share knowledge and experiences with the people he interacts with.
- Early learning takes place through internalizing and interpreting the world.
- Afterwards, the child is able to use those internalized skills such as language that have been taught to him by his parents, culture, or society. It further on helps him to think and function independently
- Language, including its written form, is the unifying tool for any culture. As language starts to develops, so do the social norms, cultural beliefs, and values

Motivation, Cognition and Learning

- It is believed that cognitive ability alone cannot account for achievement; motivation is also important in acquiring/attaining cognitive skills and abilities.
- People learn information that corresponds to, and is in accordance with, their view of the world. They learn skills that are meaningful to them. e. g. children who are born in a poor family may not give any attention or importance to the formal education and as adults, they may pass on similar beliefs and attitudes to their off springs.

- Motivation determines whether or not one is capable of learning. Whether one learns well or not, depends on one's own view and that affects the ability to learn. The motivational condition largely depends on the way the culture responds to achievements and failures.
- There are culturally developed attitudes about the probability of learning successfully after one has initially failed to learn. These attitudes can greatly affect future learning.

The Individual and the Group

- These factors also influence the extent or direction of development.
- The culture of the individual, the community, the neighborhood, social organizations, and the family, all influence the experience of the individual. But these experiences have a certain uniqueness of their own and they may be perceived and viewed differently by different people.

Cognitive Development

- Cognitive development is the development of the 'thinking' and 'organizing systems' of the brain. It involves:
 - Language,
 - Mental imagery,
 - Thinking,
 - Reasoning,
 - Problem solving and
 - Memory development

Jean Piaget'S (1896 - 1980) Theory of Cognitive Development

- Piaget was a Swiss psychologist. He was a very keen observer from the very beginning; got published his first research paper at age 15.
- As a result of his study of philosophy and logic, he became interested in epistemology i.e., knowledge and knowing; the interest in observation and epistemology made a foundation of his theory of cognitive development.
- Piaget was influenced by Henri Bergson's Creative Evolution, unlike most of the other psychologists who were impressed by Darwin's theory of evolution. Bergson believed in divine agency instead of chance as the force behind evolution: life possesses an inherent creative impulse.
- Piaget did his doctorate in Biological Science, but later became interested in psychology especially abnormal psychology.

- He secured a position in Alfred Binet's laboratory in Paris where he got a chance to observe children's performance, their right and wrong answers.
- Piaget's work and observation generated an interest in children's mental processes.
- The real shift took place when he started observing his own children from birth onwards. He kept records of their behavior and used them to trace the origins of children's thoughts to their behavior as babies; later on he became interested in the thought of adolescents as well

Piagetian Method of Investigation

- Known as the Clinical Approach; a form of a structured observation.
- Piaget used to present problems/tasks to children of different ages, asked them to explain their answers. Their explanations were further probed through carefully phrased questions.

Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development

- Sensorimotor stage
 - Age: Infancy; Birth-2 years
 - Major Characteristic:
 - Thought confined to action schemes.
 - Development of object permanence.
 - Development of motor skills.
 - Little or no capacity for symbolic representation.
- Preoperational stage
 - Age: Preschool; 2 - 7 years
 - Major characteristics Representational thought:
 - Thought is intuitive not logical.
 - Development of language and symbolic thinking takes place.
 - Thinking is egocentric.
- Concrete operational stage
 - Age: Childhood; 7 - 11 years
 - Major Characteristics:
 - Thought is systematic and logical, but only with regard to concrete objects.
 - Development of conservation, and mastery of concept of reversibility.
- Formal operational stage

- Age: Adolescence and adulthood; 11 years onward
- Major Characteristics:
 - Abstract and logical thought develops.
 - The person can deal with the abstract and the absent.

Erik Erikson'S Theory of Psychosocial Development

- Student and follower of Sigmund Freud.
- Left his native land, Germany, in 1930's and immigrated to America, where he studied Native
- American traditions of human development, and continued his work as a psychoanalyst.
- Broke with his teacher over the fundamental view about what motivates/drives human behavior. For Freud, it was 'biology' or more specifically the biological instincts of life and aggression (Eros and Thanatos) . For Erikson, the most important force that drives human behavior and which helps in the development of personality was "social interaction" .
- His developmental theory of the "Eight Stages of Man" (Erikson, 1950) was unique and different in the sense that it covered the entire lifespan rather than 'childhood' and 'adolescent development' .
- He believed that social environment combined with biological maturation results in a set of "crises" that must be resolved.
- The individual passes through the "sensitive period" and crisis at different stages, which has to be resolved successfully before a new crisis is presented. The results of the resolution, whether successful or not, are passed on to the next crisis and provide the foundation for its resolution

Erickson'S Psychosocial Developmental Stages

1-Trust vs. Mistrust (Oral-Sensory Stage)

- Birth – 18months: Infancy
- The infant develops a sense of who and when to trust.
- He learns when to protect oneself and be cautious.

2-Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt

- 18 months to 3 years: Early Childhood
- The child develops a sense of independence and is able to understand and recognize his limitations. If independence is encouraged, he develops a sense of autonomy.

- If the child is overly restricted, over-protected, or criticized it may result into self-doubt and shame. Shame occurs when child is overly self-conscious when negatively exposed. Self-doubt occurs when parents overly shame the child, e. g. about elimination.

3-Initiative vs. Guilt

- 3 to 6 years: late Childhood
- The child is able to tryout and explores various things.
- Indulges in various activities, both motor and intellectual.
- Guilt arises after doing the negative acts e. g. aggression.

4-Industry vs. Inferiority

- 6 to 11 years: School Age
- Child is busy in
 - Building,
 - Creating, and
 - Accomplishing
 - Receives systematic instruction as well as fundamentals of technology.
 - Learns norms and standards of the society in which he lives.
 - Socially decisive age. The child gains self- esteem.

5-Identity vs. Role Confusion

- Adolescence
- The person has a coherent sense of self.
- Plans to actualize one's abilities or becomes confused when unable to accomplish task.
- Problems may result in impulsive attitude or extended immaturity.
- Indecisiveness may occur.
- In extreme cases there can be a possibility of antisocial behavior.

6-Intimacy vs. Isolation

- 18 to 25 years:
- Young adulthood (beginning in the early 20s and may extend to the 40s)
- Young adults focus on:
 - Maintaining one's individuality

- Making friends
- Relationships and intimacy

7-Adulthood Generativity vs. Stagnation

- Middle adulthood (40 - 60 years)
- Age of:
 - Creativity
 - Productivity
 - Concern about guiding and helping the next generation
 - Concern for others or self-indulgence
 - Impoverishment of self

8-Ego Integrity vs. Despair

Old age

- The person develops a sense of acceptance of life as it was lived.
- Importance of the people and relationships that individual developed over the lifespan
- Comes to terms with approaching death.
- Some sort of despair is inevitable.

Lawrence Kohlberg'S Theory of Moral Development

A Psychologist _____ Born in Bronxville New York

- Served as a professor at Harvard University.
- Started as a developmental psychologist in the early 1970s and became famous for his later work in moral education and moral reasoning.
- His theory emphasizes on how moral reasoning develops in stages _____ similar with the theory of piaget's cognitive development.
- Like Piaget, Kohlberg believed that development is flourished by social interaction.
- Moral education can be taught in formal education by confronting people with moral dilemmas that evoke/arise cognitive conflicts.
- According to Kohlberg, discussion over these dilemmas promotes development, which further helps in higher stages of moral reasoning _____ showing benefits of the higher stages of reasoning.

He and Others Formulated Dilemmas for this Purpose

- Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development
- Moral reasoning, which Kohlberg thought is the basis for ethical behavior, has developmental stages.
- There are six identifiable stages of moral development.
- These stages can be classified into three levels.

Stages of Moral Development

- Level 1
 - Obedience and Punishment Orientation
 - Self- interest orientation
- Level 2
 - Interpersonal accords
 - Conformity (good boy/Good girl attitude)
 - Authority
 - Social order orientation (law and order morality)
- Level 3
 - Social contract orientation
 - Universal ethical principles (principled conscience)

Levels of Moral Development

A. Pre-Conventional

- Common in children, although adults can also exhibit this level of reasoning.
- Judging the morality of an action by its direct consequences.
- Pre-conventional level is divided into two stages:
 - Stage One: Obedience and punishment orientation
 - In stage one, individuals focus on the direct consequences that their actions will result into. They see and analyze as to what actions are morally wrong and, if the person commits them, gets punishment for it.
 - Stage two: self-interest orientation
 - In stage two, right behavior is what is defined as, 'what is in one's own best interest' . Limited or little interest is shown about other's needs.
- Concern for others is not based on loyalty or intrinsic respect.

B. Conventional

- Can easily be seen in adults and older children.

- Persons, who reason in a conventional way, judge the morality of actions by comparing these actions to social rules norms, standards, and expectations.
- The conventional level is divided into two further stages:
 - Stage three: conformity orientation
 - Individual, whose moral reasoning is in stage three, seeks approval from others.
 - Tries to be a 'good boy' or 'good girl' , having learned that there is inherent value in doing so.
 - Judging the morality of an action by evaluating its consequences.
 - Stage four: law-and-order morality
 - In stage four, individual thinks that it is important to obey the laws and social conventions because it is important in maintaining society and thus does not require approval which is important in stage three.

C. Post-Conventional

- The post-conventional level is divided into two stages;
 - Stage five: social contract orientation
 - In stage five, people have certain principles or beliefs to which they may attach more value than laws e. g. human rights or social justice.
 - Stage six: principled conscience
 - In the sixth and final stage, moral reasoning is based on the use of 'abstract reasoning' using 'universal ethical principles' .
 - Although Kohlberg insisted that sixth stage exists but he had difficulty finding people who used it.

It appears that people rarely use it, if, ever they reach this sixth stage of Kohlberg's model.