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Learning Theory Research- Piaget

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Jean Piaget is one of the most well-known learning theorists and early psychologist, known for his pioneering research in early development. Piaget's learning theory is known for the *Stages of Development* four of these stages deal with children and would be dealt with in a school setting by music educators. In his theory, the development of a child and their capacity for learning is almost entirely stage-dependent. The stages of development correlate to the growth and development of a person's brain and the function that comes with it.

The first stage of development is *Sensorimotor* and deals with infant until they reach two years old. When in this stage the sense of touch and feel are explored are the functions of the body are learned (Woolfolk, 2016). Knowing this stage is important to Music therapists so they know how the individual may respond to the world around them and what kind of music would appeal best to their developing senses. The second stage is *Preoperational* stage of development which takes place from ages two to seven years old (Campbell and Kassner, 2006). In this stage children begin to see themselves in the world around them and begin to understand that symbols mean certain things as well as habits of themselves and others. Knowing about this stage of development is important for Music Educators and Therapists so they know that they can begin to teach their first graders about music notation, and their preschoolers and kindergarteners about notes and note values (Campbell and Kassner, 2006). Timing for these skills are crucial to music

educators to ensure that the students are set up for success as early as possible and challenged to much to early.

*Concrete Operational* begins at age seven and generally goes through the age of eleven or roughly from first to fifth grade. In this stage children begin to become more actively involved with their learning as they desire to learn more by doing and become better equipped to sort and organize their tasks (Woolfolk 2016). In this stage, the students will be able to sing in independent parts such as a canon in first and second grade and eventually in a division by the time they reach fourth and fifth grade (Campbell and Kassner, 2006). Near the end of this stage would be a good time to introduce instrument to the students and get them started playing in a beginning band. This is a very important stage to teach musicianship as a child's mind is most active and absorbent during this time.

The following stage of development that will be experienced in school is the *Formal operational* stage which is known as the stage that takes place all through the adolescent years until reaching adulthood. In this stage individuals begin taking into account their relationship to the rest of the world and how each relates to another (Woolfolk, 2016). Students can easily put themselves at the vantage point of another individual and begin to use logic when solving issues. This is also the time when students become most in-tune with their emotions and social standings. As a music educator it's important to know that this is the best opportunity for a student to strive to reach their full potential musically and to challenge themselves in ways that allow for progress as their musicianship develops and settles into habits of adulthood.

Knowing Piaget's theory of stage-dependent learning is very important for all educators and especially music educators. Making musicians is a very delicate process and should be approached carefully. It's important to understand what students are capable of before expecting them to show progress. While there will always be a learning curve, it's best to have the right framework in order to best reach all of the students.

Resources:

Campbell and Kassner, (2006), *Music in Childhood*, Schirmer Cengage Learning

Woolfolk, A. E. (2016). Educational psychology, 13th ed. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.