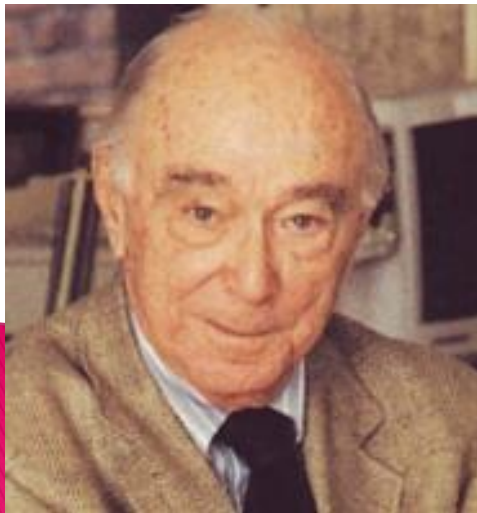


CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACHES TO LEARNING



Jerome Bruner
(1915– present)

JEROME BRUNER (1915 –)

- ▶ Argued that children learn through choice and active involvement.
 - ▶ Agreed with Piaget and Vygotsky and built on their work.
 - ▶ Doing – real first hand experiences.
 - ▶ Imaging – need things like books and interest tables.
 - ▶ Children making what they know – language, drawings.
 - ▶ Felt that scaffolding can help children learn.
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Importance of language in learning

- ▶ Suggested adults should adapt ways they work with children to meet child's needs.
 - ▶ **'scaffold learning'** or **'scaffolding'** used to describe the support an adult provides in a child's learning through play.
 - ▶ Emphasised the way in which an adult may help a child by asking questions that allow the child to solve a particular problem.
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Adult supports children's learning



Bruner's Three Modes of Learning

- ▶ ***Enactive mode – birth to approx 1 year.***
Repeating physical movements to learn new skills.
- ▶ ***Iconic mode – 1 year to 7 years.***
Building mental pictures of experiences and concepts.
- ▶ ***Symbolic mode – 7 years and up.***
Thinking changes significantly, use of symbols particularly in language development.

Modes of Learning

- ▶ **Enactive 0–1 year. Learning and thought takes place because of physical movements.**
 - ▶ Children learn a skill by repeating physical movements – first cognitive skills that babies are able to use.
 - ▶ Bruner's enactive mode mirrors Piaget's sensory–motor stage – children learning to control their bodies.
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Modes of Learning

- ▶ **Iconic mode 1–7 years. Thoughts are developed as mental images.**
 - ▶ It is visual, Bruner suggested the iconic mode involves building in children's minds pictures of things they have experienced.
 - ▶ Bruner's iconic stage relates to Piaget's pre-operational stage – children concentrate more on appearances. This is what confuses children during Piaget's conservation test.
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Modes of Learning

- ▶ **Symbolic mode 7+years. Symbols are used to help thinking e.g. language.**
 - ▶ At around 7 years children's thinking changes dramatically.
 - ▶ Linked to child's ability to use symbols and the use of language as a tool to trigger information stored in the memory.
 - ▶ In symbolic mode – thinking occurs without needing to have direct experiences e.g. listening to the news and retaining the information.
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Bruner's influence on early years practice

- ▶ Bruner expanded on Vygotsky's work by showing how adults can stimulate children's thinking.
 - ▶ Bruner felt that the development of language is essential to the child's ability to move from iconic to the symbolic mode.
 - ▶ There is great emphasis today on the importance of language in the Foundation Phase.
 - ▶ Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner all agreed that language and thought are linked.
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Spiral Curriculum

- ▶ Spiral curriculum – children learn through discovery with the help of adults by returning again and again to the same play materials, but use them in a different way because their development has progressed.
- ▶ *For example building bricks.*
 - Babies like bricks to hold, look at and drop.
 - Toddlers relish bricks to build up and knock down .
 - Three and four year olds use a good store of bricks to construct buildings and boundaries. Maybe making enclosures for animals or transport.
 - Five and six year olds and older children may still enjoy building with bricks but they may also use them for counting, and weighing etc



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