

An excerpt from a script written for a video I filmed as part of my Alternative Curricula A Unit Assessment. This section details the conversation of our interviewer (Kerry) with the fictional Professor Former Rear-Admiral Hancock, educational theorist, eccentric, and founder of the (again fictional) Four Seas School, which we had created to exhibit our group's collective vision of what holistic education should be. Here Professor Hancock is discussing his beliefs on child development, which are strongly based on the work of Jean Piaget and Erik Erikson. These views mirror my own and are a good example of my understanding of child development.

KERRY           Wow. Sounds very holistic. I assume this ties into the third of the Seas- child development. Can you tell me about that?

PROFESSOR    My beliefs about child development stem from the work of Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget and American psychologist Erik Erikson. I believe the work from both of these great psychologists have great implications for education. It is only by understanding how children learn and think and the main learning goals at each developmental stage, can we tailor our education systems to provide the best education.

KERRY           I see. Can you tell us more about the developmental stages?

PROFESSOR Piaget and Erikson, respectively outlined several stages of development. Although each stage is important in a child's development, those that coincide with schooling years are the ones I have closely examined and used to support my 4 Seas theory. While these stages are argued to be universal, individuals may not necessarily progress through them at a particular age.

KERRY These stages then cater to individual differences?

PROFESSOR That's right. The stages recognise that every child is unique in their development and therefore their education should be tailored to suit their progression.

KERRY Sounds like a great approach. Can you outline some of the stages for us?

PROFESSOR Well, Piaget's pre-operational stage, which ranges from the ages of 2 to 7, is the first stage which has direct implications for education. In this stage intelligence is developed through a child's ability to use language to represent objects and people. This development is mirrored in Erikson's theory who proposed that during the ages of 4-5 the ability to use language and participate in many physical activities

promotes initiative. Schools and other educational institutes should aim to encourage this development of initiative by promoting learning by discovery, individual learning and flexibility in the curriculum.

KERRY So this is the stage in which children should be encouraged to explore their interests and curiosities within the classroom? Much like early Montessori education?

PROFESSOR Yes, exactly. By incorporating play and allowing children to pursue their own learning interests, you are encouraging children to develop their initiative.

KERRY I imagine this promotes a very different attitude towards schooling and learning compared to a test based curriculum... much more enthusiastic. Okay. So tell us about these other stages.

PROFESSOR The Concrete-operational stage is the next stage Piaget suggested. During this stage Piaget argued children develop organised, logical thought and their thinking becomes less egocentric. Piaget suggested this normally occurs between the ages of 7 and 11. Coinciding with this development in thinking is the notion of industry. Erikson argued that at this age children's behaviours are dominated by intellectual

curiosity and performance. Children begin to learn that they can gain recognition by producing things. It's vital to encourage children to pursue this, enabling them to develop an understanding of perseverance and the importance of trying. Teacher's need to recognise the importance of recognition and praise for a child's efforts in their work, regardless of the child's level of success at the task at hand. As Piaget noted teachers should 'not assume that only what is measurable is valuable'.

KERRY An excellent point and a very different approach to schooling than a lot of schools focusing on test scores and rankings. And the final stages?

PROFESSOR Well, the Formal operational stage is Piaget's final stage which individuals may go through from the age of 11 on. In this stage abstract thought is developed and individuals demonstrate the ability to generate abstract propositions and work through arguments in their mind. It is during this time that Erikson argued individuals also experience identity and role confusion. Erikson suggests that at this stage it is important to help adolescents to develop the roles and skills that will help them take a meaningful place in society. It also becomes increasingly important for individuals to establish close and committed relationships with others in order to experience satisfying

development. Within school these relationships should emerge between students and teachers in the early years of schooling and strengthen over time.