11.1 Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory: 30-minute Pack

AQA 7182 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Outline object permanence and its stage

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 Apply Piaget to classroom conservation scenario

(Total for Question 2 is 6 marks)

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3 Discuss Piaget and Vygotsky

(Total for Question 3 is 16 marks)

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Mark scheme · 11.1 Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

defines object permanence as the understanding that objects continue to exist when out of sight oe	**B1**
states it typically emerges in the sensorimotor stage (by about 8 to 12 months) oe	**B1**

Answer: Object permanence is the understanding that objects continue to exist when they are no longer seen, and it typically emerges in the sensorimotor stage, usually by around 8 to 12 months of age.

Question 2

identifies that the task is a conservation task about quantity/mass (concrete operational concept) oe	**M1**
states that 6-year-old children are typically in the preoperational stage where conservation is not yet fully understood oe	**M1**
explains Erin's response in terms of centration and focus on appearance: she focuses on the flattened shape and is fooled by perceptual change oe	**A1**
explains Yusuf's correct response as showing emerging or achieved concrete operational thinking, understanding conservation because he recognises the amount is invariant despite appearance oe	**A1**
links the differing answers to stage-appropriate thinking: preoperational children conserve poorly while concrete operational children conserve correctly oe	**M1**
gives a brief contextual reason why children of the same age may differ, e.g. individual differences in development or task familiarity oe	**A1**

Answer: The question tests conservation. At about 6 years, many children are in Piaget's preoperational stage and show centration, so Erin focuses on the new flattened appearance and says it has more. Yusuf's answer shows understanding of conservation, typical of concrete operational thinking, recognising the amount has not changed despite appearance. Individual differences in development or prior experience can explain why children of similar age differ.

Question 3

Level 4 Knowledge of Piaget and Vygotsky is accurate and detailed. Discussion is thorough and evaluative, integrating evidence that both supports and challenges the theories. The candidate compares the individual versus social emphasis, addresses methodological criticisms that Piaget may have underestimated abilities, and evaluates the educational application of scaffolding and the ZPD, showing clear reasoning and use of appropriate terminology.	**13-16**
Level 3 Knowledge is clear with some detail. Discussion includes evaluation and some comparison between the theories, and mentions evidence about Piaget's tasks underestimating ability or the educational usefulness of scaffolding. Some points may be less developed or less well integrated.	**9-12**
Level 2 Knowledge is present but limited. Discussion is superficial with few evaluative points and limited comparison. May mention one or two relevant studies or applications without developing implications clearly.	**5-8**
Level 1 Very limited knowledge and evaluation. Answers are brief, fragmented or largely descriptive, with little or no comparison or reference to evidence or applications.	**1-4**
Level 0 No creditable content.	**0**

Indicative content:

- AO1 content: Piaget emphasised stages of individual cognitive development, driven by processes such as assimilation, accommodation and equilibration; key concepts include object permanence, egocentrism, conservation and class inclusion.
- AO1 content: Vygotsky emphasised social interaction and language in development, learning through more knowledgeable others, with the zone of proximal development and scaffolding central to his account.
- AO3 comparison: Piaget views development as driven by internal maturation and stages, implying readiness limits what a child can learn independently; Vygotsky sees learning leading development, with social interaction enabling earlier or higher-level performance within the ZPD.
- AO3 evidence that Piaget may have underestimated abilities: methodological criticisms include tasks that rely on verbal explanation or unfamiliar contexts (e.g. conservation or three mountains tasks) which may under-estimate competence; studies using simpler or more familiar tasks often find earlier competence, suggesting Piaget's age ranges may be conservative.
- AO3 counter-evidence: Piaget's account captures broad qualitative changes in thinking and has strong explanatory power for patterns of errors such as centration in preoperational children.
- AO3 educational application of Vygotsky: scaffolding and the ZPD have clear practical value, directing teachers to provide targeted, temporary support and collaborative learning; evidence from classroom interventions shows improved learning when instruction is ZPD-focused, though effect sizes vary.
- AO3 limitations of Vygotsky: the theory is less specific about developmental stages and mechanisms for individual differences and may be harder to falsify; practical constraints include resource demands for one-to-one scaffolding.
- AO3 synthesis: both perspectives offer valuable insights; Piaget highlights developmental changes and cognitive structures, Vygotsky highlights social mechanisms and the role of culture and instruction. Effective education can combine both ideas, using stage-appropriate activities and social scaffolding to extend learning.
- AO3 evaluation of evidence and methodology: discuss empirical studies and methodological issues, and consider cultural and individual differences that support Vygotsky's emphasis on cultural tools and social context.

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