

## The Cognitive Approach – Bruner

### Approach theorist

### Key aspects of the approach or theory relating to children's development and behaviour

### Application of the approach for childcare practitioners and educators in schools and settings

Cognitive:

Bruner

#### Key words:

- Spiral Curriculum
- Enactive
- Iconic
- Symbolic
- Discovery

Jerome Bruner believed that theories like behaviourism included important aspects of learning such as motivation and intuition. Like Piaget, he developed a staged theory of development. Bruner proposed a model, with three modes of thinking linked not to age, but experience. He believed the aim of education is creating autonomous learners who have learned how to learn; he introduced three models of representation as part of his learning theory and introduced the concepts of discovery learning and the spiral curriculum.

**Enactive representation (0-1yrs):** Storing action-based information in the memory, Bruner believed that both children and adults can recall tasks through muscular memory.

**Iconic representation (1-6yrs):** The ability to store mental pictures. When children learn new information, it can help them to have visual images and diagrams to reinforce verbal explanations.

**Symbolic representation (7yrs and over):** This is a more complex way of learning based on language. The mind remembers information through language, words and mathematical signs, and mentally stores and classifies them. Bruner's constructivist theory suggests that all learners, including adults, should pass through all three models of learning from enactive to iconic and then symbolic.

The spiral curriculum is based on the concept that a child of any age can be taught complex information if it is taught in a way that is age and ability appropriate. Bruner believed that information should first be learned in a simplified form and then added to at a later stage in a more complex form. By following this approach, any concept or subject can be taught at gradually increasing levels of difficulty.

Bruner's theory states that children construct their own learning through organising, categorising and then coding information. He believed that the most effective way to do this is to discover information rather than being told it by a teacher. The teacher's job is to support and facilitate learning by aiding the process of discovery.