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| **Learning Table 4: Core Study**  **Piaget’s (1952) Conservation of Number Experiment** | |
| According to Piaget, pre-operational children (2 – 7 yrs) lack the thinking skills to conserve. Conservation means ‘the understanding that certain physical characteristics of objects remain the same even when their outward appearance changes.’ The child at this stage of development is influenced by the ways things look and is unable to conserve. Piaget devised an experiment to demonstrate this. | |
| Aim: | To provide evidence for Piaget’s Stage Theory of Cognitive Development. |
| Procedure: | * Piaget used a cross-sectional study in his experiment on conservation. Children were shown, one at a time, two identical parallel rows of counters with the counters opposite facing each other one to one. * They were then asked ‘which has more?’ * The researcher then changed the layout of the counters as the child watched, stretching one row out but not removing or adding any counters to the row. * The children were then asked which of the two rows had more counters. |
| Findings | * Children in the pre-operational stage (2 – 7 yrs) tended to say that the rearranged or stretched row had more counters because it was longer. Presumably they were not able to conserve. * However, children in the concrete operational stage (7 – 11) did largely get it right. They reported both lines had the same number of counters despite the difference in length of line. |
| Conclusion | * Piaget concluded that this was strong empirical support for his stage theory of cognitive development. |