

Discuss how Carl Rogers' person centred therapeutic approach and other humanist theories support the work of TAs and LSAs in schools

Discussions over optimal methods for student's education have persisted for over a century. During the first part of the 20th century, children were regarded as passive consumers of information, resulting in predominantly teacher-directed pedagogy (Westwood, 2008). The studies in psychology and the publication of the Plowden Report (1967) facilitated the emergence of a person-centred approach, which prioritises students in education, recognising each learner as a distinct individual with diverse experiences, abilities, interests, and needs. This strategy is deemed highly beneficial for children with additional learning needs and disadvantaged backgrounds, who often experience a loss of enthusiasm and frustration during the learning process (Westwood, 2008). Person-centred education seeks to preserve and enhance a student's creative potential for learning, fostering wholeness and unity. It underscores individual growth and development, enabling students to contribute meaningfully to their lives and communities (Zucconi, 2016). The revised 2022 Welsh Curriculum emphasises this core purpose, integrating intrinsic and discovery learning, alongside subject matter and resources pertinent to learners' needs and interests (Donaldson, 2015, p.29). Teaching Assistants are essential in enhancing learning by offering support and opportunities, emphasising individuality, and empowering students to excel in their educational journey and self-concept development (EEF, 2021). This method cultivates inclusive and supportive settings, enhancing autonomy, self-esteem, and self-actualization, in accordance with Rogers, Maslow's and Horney's humanistic perspectives encouraging individuals to realise their

full potential. This essay will examine the humanism perspectives of theorists and their application in a secondary school, referred to as Setting A.

Carl Rogers established the person-centred approach, which asserts that individuals have extensive self-awareness resources to transform their self-concept, attitudes, and behaviours (Zucconi, 2016). The method fosters the cultivation of potential through safe, growth-enhancing interpersonal relationships, governed by three fundamental conditions: congruence, unconditional positive regard, and empathy. Rogers emphasised the necessity for educators to be candid, authentic, and transparent, exhibiting a non-judgmental disposition to foster acceptance, trust, and respect (Zucconi, 2016). He argued that empathy rehumanises learners, enabling them to internalise their experiences and meanings while being profoundly understood and accepted, facilitating a reciprocal process on their journey towards wholeness (Beynon, Robson, and Pattison, 2015). He proposes that congruence fosters trust, which is essential for interpersonal connections and a tendency of pupils to be forthcoming. Congruence enables learners to examine their emotions and experiences within a secure, nurturing environment, allowing them to align their self-concept with their inherent potential (Beynon, Robson, and Pattison, 2015). Rogers' person-centred methodology emphasises qualitative facilitative relationships as central to effective learning and development. Abraham Maslow proposes that an individual's learning response is predominantly influenced by their immediate needs (Bates, 2019). In his theoretical framework 'The Hierarchy of Needs', he demarcated five levels: physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness, self-esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow posited that the satisfaction of fundamental needs

is requisite prior to achieving self-actualization (Bates, 2019). His humanistic approach to education empowers pupils to actualise their potential. Students may display disruptive behaviour in class, resulting in a decreased focus on learning and accomplishment due to inadequate sleep, hunger, or bullying, which undermines their sense of safety, belonging, and psychological needs; hence, behaviours are driven by the pursuit of need fulfilment (Burleson and Thoron, 2014). Identifying student needs enables practitioners to design environments and allocate resources in accordance with learners' requirements. This student-centred approach may augment motivation to learn by imparting meaning and purpose, cultivating positive self-esteem, and facilitating personal development. Practitioners can foster supportive settings and curriculum that encourage authenticity, personal growth, and self-exploration, in accordance with Maslow's claim that identity discovery necessitates self-reflection (Kenneth, 2024). This further corresponds with Rogers' concept of versatility and the fully functioning individual. At the core of their humanist approach was the belief that learning is attainable solely when it is transformational, experiential, and significant (DeCarvalho, 1991). Karen Horney's theory of neurosis posits that human development is motivated by the pursuit of safety and satisfaction, rather than by intrinsic reasons. Neurosis is multifaceted shaped by environmental and social circumstances, particularly childhood experiences, necessitating nurturing settings and robust relationships for individuals to express themselves freely (PHILO-notes, 2022). Factors contributing to neuroticism encompass a deficiency of affection, discrimination, isolation, and injustice, which erode self-esteem and interpersonal relationships, resulting in undesirable emotions, anxiety, stress, self-loathing behaviours and hostility (Nickerson, 2024). Horney suggested that the brain evolves intense defensive mechanisms

akin to the fight, flight, or freeze response. Initially, 'Moving against others' fosters exploitative and aggressive behaviour, perceiving everyone as a possible threat. Secondly, 'Moving away from others' leads individuals to separate themselves from both peers and society, while 'Moving towards others' compels individuals to acquiesce to others, striving for affection and engaging in people-pleasing behaviours (PHILO-notes, 2024). Students experiencing anxiety or adverse childhood experiences may possess a limited window of tolerance, identifying potential threats that their professionals may not recognise as such. This may lead to persistent hyperarousal states (fight or flight) or a hypoarousal state (frozen) (Lewis, 2021). Consequently, students may assert dominance over others to mitigate feelings of vulnerability, retreat to safeguard oneself, exert control to attain a sense of security, or seek attention for social validation (PHILO-notes, 2024). Research indicates that under extreme stress, the brain's frontal cortex becomes inactive, leading students to engage in irrational thinking (Lewis, 2021). If educators lack empathy, congruence, and understanding of students' emotions, they may view students' behaviours as unacceptable and respond defensively, exacerbating the situation and further undermining the students' self-concept. Horney, like Rogers and Maslow proposed that humans may accomplish growth and development when their authentic self is cultivated (Nickerson, 2024) which a TA can possibly facilitate.

Several emerging government policies, in addition to the Equality Act 2010, the SEN Code of Practice 2013, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1989, underscore the significance of acknowledging the child in their entirety and establishing secure and stimulating environments where children are respected, and

their strengths are cultivated. The teaching assistant standards of Wales (2019) provide expectations for staff to engage with children in specific manners, emphasising the need of identifying barriers to learning, addressing children's needs, and fostering relationships with pupils, aligned with the humanist perspective.

Setting A's educational practices and policies are founded on child-centred principles, with teaching assistants utilising One-Page Profile documents for acquiring student information regarding interests, aspirations, and future objectives. Such document is acknowledged by the Welsh Government (2015) as an effective child-centred tool and enables students to take responsibility and ownership of their learning, whilst facilitating professionals in the optimal planning of the curriculum and environment. Differentiation and kinaesthetic methods could possibly enhance recall and concentration, whilst extended challenges encourage students to embrace mistakes and push their boundaries within a secure setting. Teaching assistants can offer individualised assistance, modelling and scaffolding a learner's educational progression, while fostering self-esteem and self-concept development. Practitioners with strong relationships with students may create elevated expectations for learners, influencing their performance and behaviour. Referred to as the Pygmalion effect, this self-fulfilling prophecy, is suggested to enhance personal and educational success, and possibly the dispelling of self-loathing beliefs one may hold about oneself (Sprouts, 2019). Moreover, teaching assistants can employ targeted strategies to assist students with additional learning needs or schedule regular breaks for medical necessities, thereby ensuring they have the necessary support to thrive and achieve their potential. Setting A features two Hwbs operated by teaching assistants, offering a tranquil

environment enhanced by therapeutic music, bean bags, mandala art, puppets, and sand trays. These tools assist students facing challenging life events and communication barriers in articulating their complex emotions and feelings through metaphors and stories. This non-directive play therapy approach, advocated by Roger's student and colleague Virginia Axline, illustrates its capacity to foster a therapeutic alliance, permitting students to participate actively in their own therapy and healing (Beynon, Robson and Pattison, 2015). Trained practitioners can employ techniques including PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy) and the 3 R's (Regulate, Relate, Repair) to cultivate secure, trustful attachments, enhance emotional development, encourage a sense of belonging and equip students with positive-coping mechanisms (PACE training, 2024). The HWB also offers access to uniform, toast, and water to address the psychological needs of learners, thereby diminishing potential barriers to education. Students experiencing anxiety, anger, or worry may self-refer to the Hwb, or if they exhibit neurotic behaviour in class, may be referred by the teacher. Setting A comprises 1,600 pupils and 300 staff members, including 27 teaching assistants. A number of teaching assistants contend that some educators continue to employ outmoded behaviourist concepts, including persistent operant conditioning and punitive methods, resulting in a conflict between the methodology of teaching assistants and the viewpoints of teachers. This may result in pupils fearing the teacher and developing aversion to the subject, elevating the frequency of absences and potentially rendering students' immunity to disruptive behaviours (Fairclough, 2008) due to unmet social, emotional and mental health needs (Gray and Woods, 2022). This may elevate the therapeutic need for teaching assistants and an intensified workload (Hall and Webster, 2023). Although some educators contend, they lack therapeutic skills,

Wilkins (2010) underscores the significance of qualitative attention, congruence, empathy, and unconditional positive regard above theoretical knowledge and understanding of a learner's circumstances, responses, or life experiences.

In conclusion, humanist principles and Rogers' person-centred approach could provide a constructive framework for educational reform. Person-centred approaches implemented by teaching assistants may produce many positive outcomes for learners, such as increased student satisfaction, improved attendance, enhanced self-image, better relationships, and greater ownership and responsibility for their learning, all of which contribute to personal, social, and emotional development, thereby encouraging students to achieve their full potential (Zucconi, 2016, p.17). This may potentially elevate teaching assistant job satisfaction, ultimately improving their own self-concepts, beliefs, and attitudes towards supporting learners, which according to some studies, identity as an educator is equally significant as the content one imparts, emphasising the process of learning equally to the outcome of knowledge acquisition (Donaldson, 2015).

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