

Academic Scrapbook

Jenna Balbini

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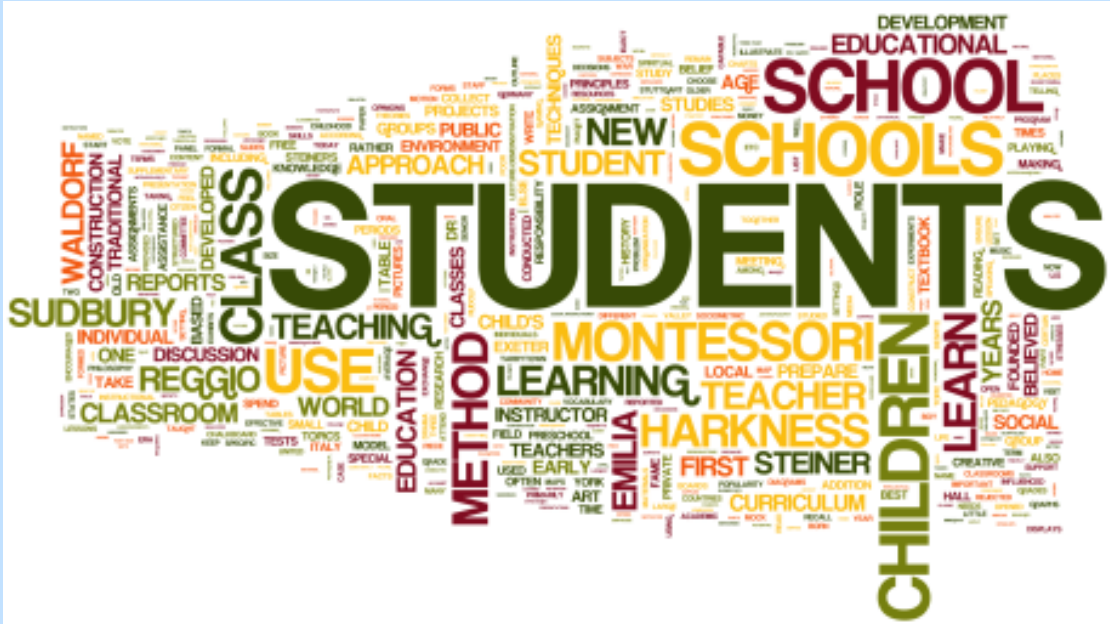
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Operant Conditioning

B.F Skinner

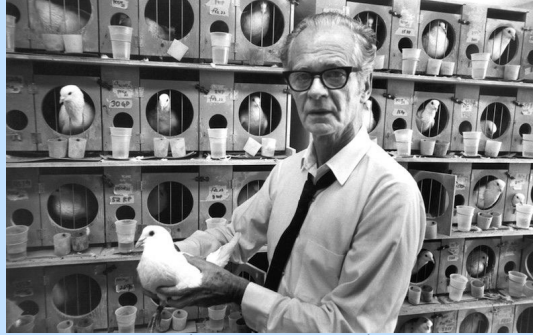
Burrhus Frederic Skinner, also known as B.F Skinner is an American psychologist who defined his

own branch of behaviourism called Operant Conditioning. The theory states that behaviour can be shaped through positive and negative reinforcement. The positive and negative reinforcements are delivered in the form of a reward and consequence (Aubrey and Riley, 2019, pg 70)

In the past, schools would mainly utilise the effects of negative reinforcement through extreme consequences, in the form of corporal punishment; the cane and other beatings. While this was banned in the UK in 1998, negative reinforcement continues to be used as a means of managing negative behaviour in mainstream schools; detentions, exclusions and loss of privileges (Aubrey and Riley, 2019 pg 78). However, Skinner felt that this only temporarily managed the behaviour, and that it is in fact counterproductive - he advocated that positive reinforcement is more effective (Bates, 2019, pg 35).

Since this, applying systems to eliminate undesired behaviour through rewarding the desired behaviours have been utilised by practitioners, as the theory states that the application of reinforcements will increase the possibility of a behaviour occurring again (Aubrey and Riley, 2019, pg 78).

Reward systems in schools are embedded in every day practice through a variety of ways (Aubrey and Riley, 2019, pg 78) such as stickers, praise, merit points, year group points, desired activities and merit trips. These are often rewarded for positive behaviour in class, positive work effort in class, positive social behaviour toward peers and high attendance.



(Highbrow, 2019)



(School A Reward Chart for Attendance and Behaviour, 2019)

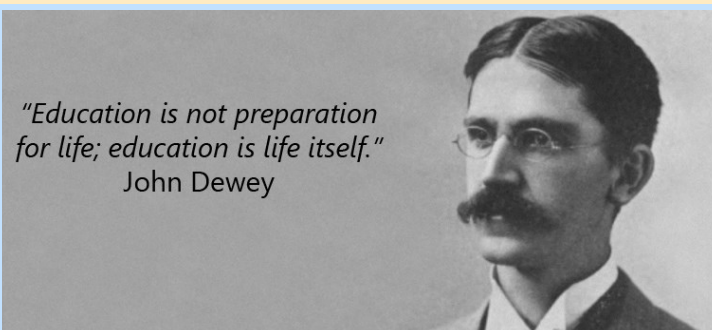
Operant Conditioning In Practice

To support a child at secondary school with Autism Spectrum Disorder behavioural issues in class and issues with school refusal, a chart system is put in place. The individual has the opportunity to design their own behaviour and attendance chart and decide which rewards are given. The individual are able to incorporate their favourite things - as such the individual in this case chose their favourite colours, animals and mythical creatures and decided on sparkly unicorn stickers as the reward.

There is also a rules system in place, created in collaboration with the individual, where they are offered an activity of their choosing at the end of the week as a result of one full week attendance, or four days out of five with positive behaviour in class. As Skinner states, it is important that the practitioner clearly communicates what behaviours are expected and the rules aim to help the individual understand what is expected of them (Aubrey and Riley, 2019, pg 78). The rules are also created in collaboration with the individual and gives them opportunities to voice their opinions; to help them feel understood and heard. This also opens a conversation about why the rules are put in place and can then encourage the individual to take responsibility for their own behaviours. This is in the hope that they are more likely to follow a rule if they understand the reasons behind it.

Skinner states that the approach is reliant on a consistent approach (Aubrey and Riley, 2019, pg 78) and therefore, in practice, there are clear rewards that are followed through every week. It is important in this case that the rewards are deliverable to ensure the reward is carried out and the behaviour is reinforced. The individual decides on an activity each week such as cooking or baking that can be carried out in the ALN department, or making a craft from the selection at the Nurture Base.

Social Constructivism



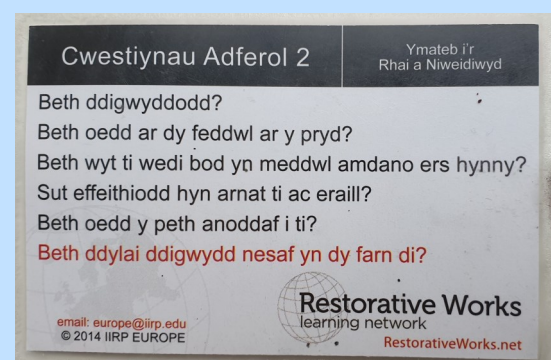
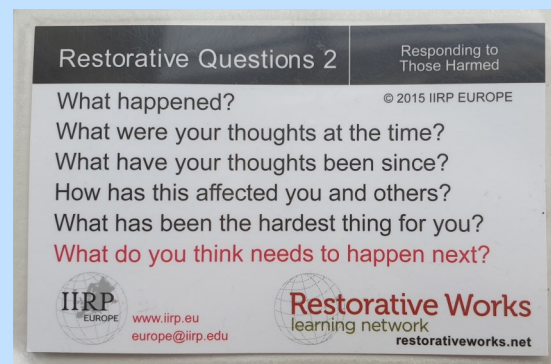
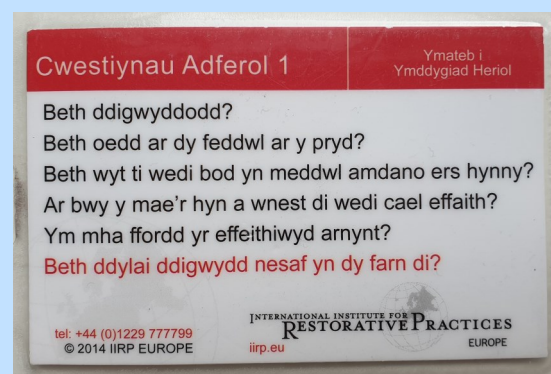
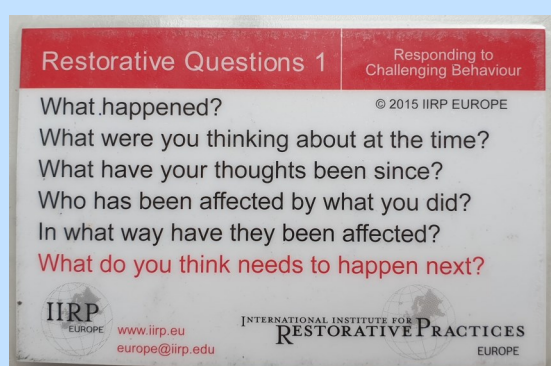
(UCSB, 2014)

John Dewey

Dewey's theory states that learning is driven by active experience, rather than being told information in the hopes of developing the skill of remembering facts. (Aubrey and Riley, 2019, pg 10). The theory called for individual pupils to be a part of their learning by putting their interests at the heart of the process, in the hopes that active experience is seen by the individual as meaningful. Dewey believed that it is the practitioner's responsibility to provide a trusting social environment for discussion (Carr, 2003, pg 223), provide opportunities to partake in activities, and help individuals develop skills to process and solve issues (Aubrey and Riley, 2019, pg 11).

He advocated learner centred pedagogies, and felt that the voices of the learner should be central to practice (Aubrey and Riley, 2019, pg 12). This has now been integrated into current practice in many different forms.

Reflective practice has been adopted over the last 30 years as a tool for learning in educational settings. Dewey felt that it builds a body of knowledge for the future development of individuals (Aubrey and Riley, 2019, pg 12).



(Provided by IIRP Europe, 2014)

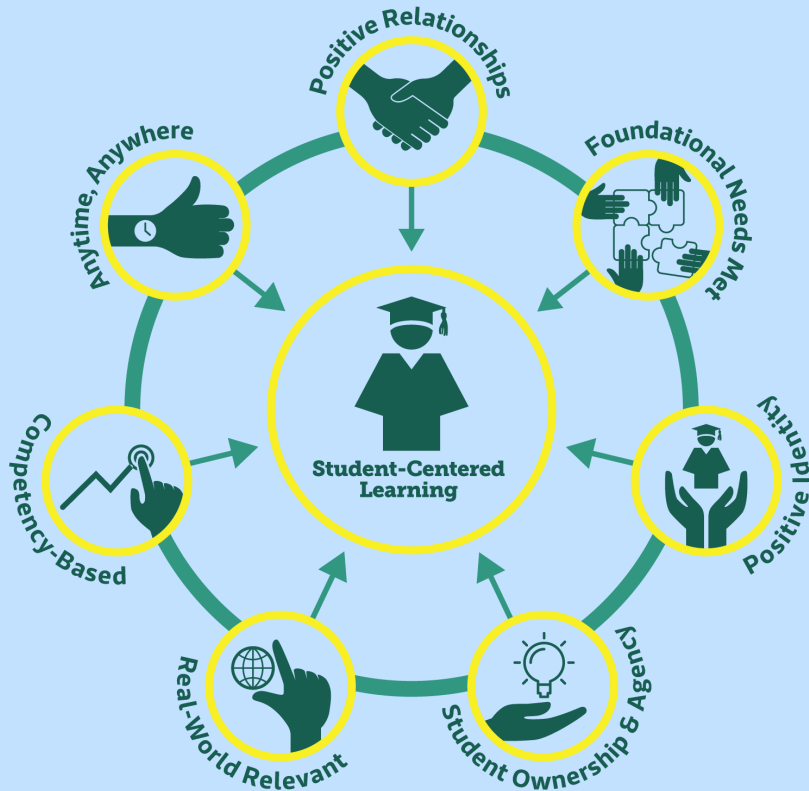
Reflective Approach In Practice

In a Welsh rural secondary school (School A), to support children with and without Additional Learning Needs with a lack in social skills, and/or challenging behaviour, restorative practice is used. Restorative practice is used to resolve conflict and prevent harm by enabling those who have been harmed to share the impact with the individual responsible, in the hope that the individual responsible can acknowledge the impact of their behaviour, and to take steps in order to resolve the issue (Restorative Justice Council, 2016).

These laminated flash cards, that are attached to staff lanyards, from the Restorative Works training programme aid in practice. They are used to resolve conflicts between pupils and their peers, and staff. The first questions that have a red tag are the questions that the individual responsible for harming is asked, and the latter, second set with black tag are the questions that the victim is asked. They can be used to resolve small issues in the hope to prevent further issues occurring which may then lead to conferencing - a formal gathering with all members associated and two members of staff, usually utilised in cases of bullying or more serious issues.

The questions must be asked in a non judgemental way and each person must be given time to speak to ensure the process is fair and does not become hostile. The process allows offending individuals to reflect on their own behaviour, acknowledge the harm they have caused, take responsibility, and allows them the opportunity to apologise and repair the harm caused, in the hope that re-offending is reduced. It allows victims to have their voice heard, ask questions about the behaviour, witness genuine remorse and will reduce anxiety of an incident occurring again. This process develops emotional literacy, conflict resolution skills, empathy, positive behaviour and attendance, and reduces conflicts and the need for sanctions such as detentions and exclusions (Restorative Justice 4 Schools, 2015).

Conclusion



(Education Evolving, 2019)

Both theories concentrate on learner centred pedagogy, Operant Conditioning thrives on including the individual in the process, concentrating on their interests to ensure the process is meaningful to them, aim to improve behaviour and quality of life and learning for individuals.

Social constructivism also thrives on including the individuals in the entire process and aims to improve behaviour and quality of life and learning for individuals, but adds a social aspect to the approach. In this approach, individuals are able to improve in being members of the classroom and school community by socially empathizing and understanding their peers differences. This approach has a much more communal, communicational and reflective aspect, by helping maintain peer relationships. Although Operant Conditioning is aimed to improve behaviour, which also improves participation in the school community, the reflective approach in Social Constructivism allows pupils to have a deeper understanding of how their behaviour affects the community through the acquisition of empathy from learning conflict resolution skills and accountability (Restorative Justice 4 Schools, 2015).

To conclude, in my opinion both approaches are effective in practice, but some may work more efficiently with different age groups. Operant Conditioning may appeal to a younger year group, as it appears as childlike, in the way that reward charts are created and managed. Although some individuals of an older age in Secondary education may enjoy designing their own chart, and may agree on the rationale behind the rules, from experience, when using and managing the chart, some individuals may feel embarrassed by placing a sticker or a tick. Often this process can be adjusted to help the individual feel more comfortable, but they may conclude it is too childlike and decide to terminate the use of the chart, possibly causing a decrease in positive behaviour.

Social constructivism and restorative practice may be more age appropriate to Secondary school as it requires a sense of social awareness and rationale to reflect, that some individuals may not have acquired in Primary education. Although many of the individuals utilising the reflective practice are those with social issues and behavioural issues, and may have difficulties in practicing social awareness, they are able to rationalise and empathise more than perhaps a younger individual could, due to more social experience with the development of their age.

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