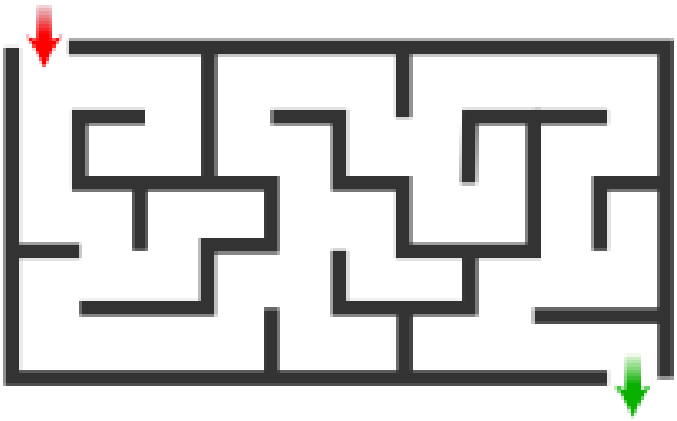
ECIE4012

The Principles of Learning and Teaching

Portfolio

Student Number: 1911890

How to navigate around children



(Wikipedia contributor,. 2023)

The maze solution for adults around children

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Maze 1

Are children as 'trainable' as they say?

Whether you are a parent, grand parent, work in a school, a nursery, a play area, summer camp or been anywhere near a child that misbehaves, you have probably thought 'Would someone teach that child to behave'. 'Can someone teach that child a lesson?' Do you blame yourself or the parent or guardian that is with the child at that moment? Well unfortunately there is a lot more to it than it seems.

There are 3 major theories of learning to be aware of. They may sound frightening and complicated at first but you will soon see that they are vital to everyday learning. Ready to find out some more? Come follow me through the maze!

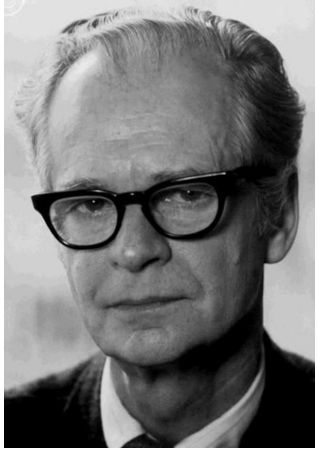
Behaviourism

I'm sure as you read the title you thought of someone who has implied that children's behaviour can be changed easily. Maybe a parent, a friend, grandparent, teacher or even someone higher from the government or maybe you've read it in a textbook for research. Either way it's most likely been someone who hasn't come from the education sector and most likely think they know better.

Who then?

Well, the 'they' I am referring to here is none of the above. Today 'they' is……

The american Psychologist… **Burrhus Frederic Skinner**



(IMDb, 1990-2024)

As a "professor of psychology at Harvard University from 1948, Skinner influenced a generation of psychologists" (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1999) You may have heard of his research using the Skinner Boxes.

What is behaviourism?

- Established in the 1900's (MSEd, 2022). Many psychologists worked with animals to underpin the principles of behaviourism, then transferring them to humans. I mean after all us humans have apparently evolved from monkeys. But anyway that can be saved for another day.
- Theory of learning - based on the idea that all "behaviours are acquired through conditioning, and conditioning occurs through interaction with the environment." (MSEd, 2022)
- Situated on the principle of stimulus and response.
  - people need to be directed and ordered and if the stimulus is something that the individual wants (a reward) or alarm (a punishment) a behaviour can be changed as the individual will respond accordingly.

Behaviours are the result of experience. Any person, regardless of their background, can be trained to act in a particular manner given the right conditioning.

Skinner's Theory

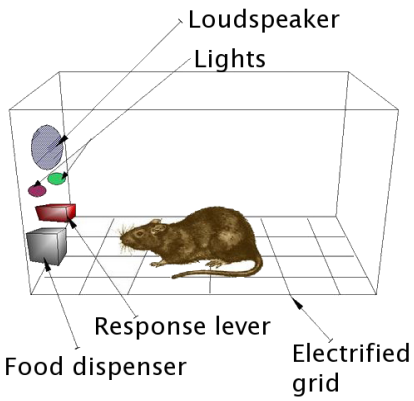
With all due respect, Skinner has basically developed the ideas of psychologists before him, notably Pavlov and Watson by using the same idea of reflecting humans as animals in his research. Skinner's research is Based on Thorndike's research "who is regarded as the first pure behavioural psychologist" (Bates, 2019) but mainly influenced by Pavlov and classical conditioning.

Skinner Boxes!

Rat = Humans

Food = Reward

Electric grid = Punishment



(Psynso, 2017)

A Skinner box (operant conditioning chamber) is a device that records an animal's behaviour in a compressed time frame" (Nickerson, 2023) The animal can be "rewarded or punished for engaging in certain behaviours e.g. lever pressing (for rats) / key pecking (for pigeons)." (Mcleod, 2023)

Skinner developed his theory by identifying 4 different types of punishment / reward.

Positive Reinforcement - Add something pleasant - increases the likelihood of a behaviour - Sticker for sitting quietly on the mat	Negative Reinforcement - Remove something unpleasant - Increase the desired behaviour - Not having to do a test / not giving out homework
Positive Punishment - Add an unpleasant response - Decreases the behaviour - Detention / extra work	Negative Punishment - Removing something pleasant - Decrease the behaviour - Moving them away from their friend

Ever played a game of hot or cold? Click here to watch a video of the theory in practice.

What does this mean for us?

Undeniably Skinner's research is still relevant to this day. It has assisted **educators and teachers** to create a balance in reinforcement and punishment in schools and classrooms. Teachers want to see the students in their classrooms behave in a certain order, by controlling and manipulating the environment it is possible to predict and control behaviour. For example using chart boards (Dojo's).

Although some areas of the research into behaviourism can be seen as unethical, the theory has perched the basis of teaching approaches and is still useful for **learners** who may need extra guidance or direction, activities that need precise steps or even in environments that are open to health hazards like P.E lessons with equipment that can hurt other students or even as simple as classroom rules.

Additionally it can be useful for **parents/guardians** but also to **individuals of all ages** when trying to improve habits and negative behaviour as behaviour can be altered. Through the use of rewards and punishment we are able to discourage unwanted behaviour such as completing chores by rewarding them with pocket money.

Ready to give it a go?

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Maze 2

Are children like chickens then?

(Ekapanova, 2023)

If chickens are anything to go by then surely it would be the same about children. We all get told 'free chickens are the best chickens' - they get to roam freely, safely and not caged. Surely that's the same as the way children learn, right?

Imagine your a child being confined to only being allowed to play with certain toys, being told no all the time, only speaking to the same person everyday, no one else to interact with, no one to listen to. Would get boring right?

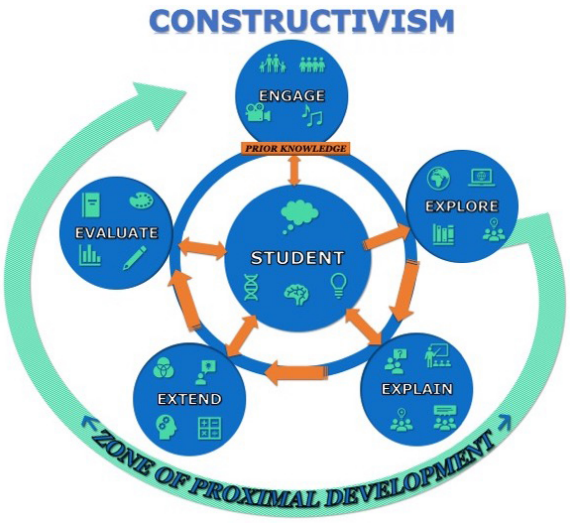
Well let's think of the opposite, enjoyment while learning, developing in our own ways, being able to do what we'd like to and with who we do it with (safely)! More likely to take part?

(Brgfx, 2017)

(kenary820)

Welcome to constructivism!

- ➔ "posits that students learn new information by building on top of a foundation of what they've already learned" (Tprestianni, 2023)
- ➔ "asserts that each student interacts with material – and knowledge – differently, based on personal experiences and feelings. Each student may bring a different perspective to the same lesson." (Tprestianni, 2023)
- ➔ Learn through direct experience
- ➔ Encourage & develop imagination & creativity
- ➔ Free-will / Free range children
- ➔ Making decisions themselves (independence)
- ➔ Active process
- ➔ Motivation and concentration levels peak
- ➔ Practitioners observe (Merrick, 2022)
- ➔ Relevant to all



(Mangino, 2019)

Still relevant today in nursery and early education as the key aspect is for them to learn through play.

Froebel - Who is he?

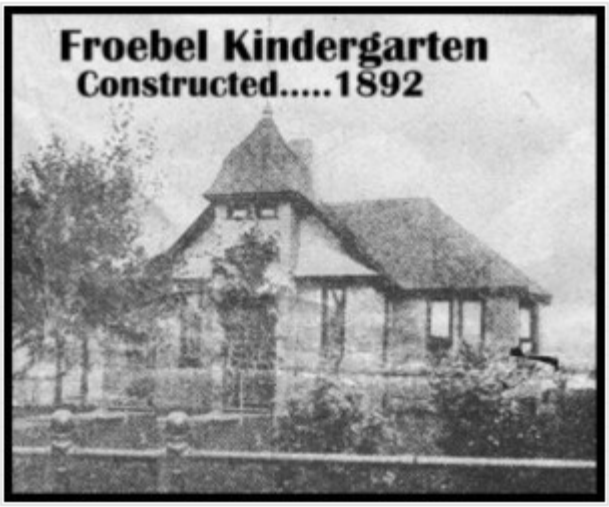
- Born: Nineteenth Century, 1782-1852 (Froebel Trust, 2023)
- "The creator of kindergarten and a pioneer to early childhood education and care" (Froebel Trust, 2023)
- Studied: Mathematics and languages - also had a thorough knowledge of plants & natural phenomena (Curtis, 1998)
- Childhood: "Froebel's strict father, a Lutheran pastor, raised him from infancy after Froebel's mother died" until the age of ten where he was moved to live with his Uncle (GoodTherapy Editor Team, 2015)
- A significant thinker and influence on early childhood learning
- Froebel "considered the whole child's health, physical development, the environment, emotional well-being, mental ability, social relationships and spiritual aspects" as contributions to their development (Froebel Trust, 2023)
- Teaching: "His first professional position was as a teacher at a school in Frankfurt" (GoodTherapy Editor Team, 2015)
- Froebel believed that;

(Merrick, 2022)
(Quotefancy, 2024)

The word 'Kindergarten' literally translates to "child's garden" (Bates, 2019). Froebel was the founder of the first Kindergarten and emphasised that play is important for young children and can be used as a learning tool. Singing, dancing, and similar forms of play were implemented into his educational model (GoodTherapy Editor Team, 2015) Instead of adults / teachers instructing the children / students, Froebel believed that the children were they 'flowers' and that the adults should perform as 'gardeners' (Bates, 2019).

- ☐ The goal is to "teach children in all developmental areas; socially, academically, emotionally, physically and spiritually" (Bates, 2019).
- ☐ Gives children the chance to develop fine motor skills - can aid them to learn different activities such as writing and physical activities like sport and art.

What better way than to achieve this in the outdoors!



(Hanten)

Froebel's kindergarten theory is similar to Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (Social constructivism). "Vygotsky believed that knowledge and thoughts are constructed through social interaction" (Bates, 2019). This could be with family, friends, teachers and peers. These are known as 'Most Knowledgeable Others' / MKO (Mcleod, 2023). The MKO provides guidance and models to enable the child to learn skills within their zone of proximal development. The more skills and knowledge that the child will learn the more the MKO will interact. Vygotsky argued that

higher mental abilities could only develop through interaction with more advanced others (Mcleod, 2023) in comparison to Froebel where the MKO as such would just observe. Froebel is on the edge of social constructivism as the children are learning through play, ecology, creating their own rules, sharing and communicating with others which is a critical social interaction.

Even though we are in the 21st century, it is still transparent that children enjoy the outdoors and the benefits that come with it. Including keeping children fit and healthy! Being outdoors with freedom to space will allow more expansive movement leading to good physical exercise and helping prevent obesity (Nidirect, 2022)

Being outdoors can actually reduce the need for glasses in later development of a child's life? It appears to greatly cut the risk that you will need glasses for nearsightedness by about 14% if a child spends just 1 additional hour of outdoor time per week! (Oosthoek, 2019)

So why not try it? Give it a go! It will benefit the classroom in more ways than one!

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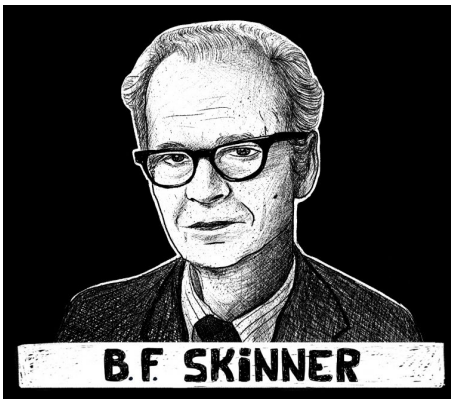
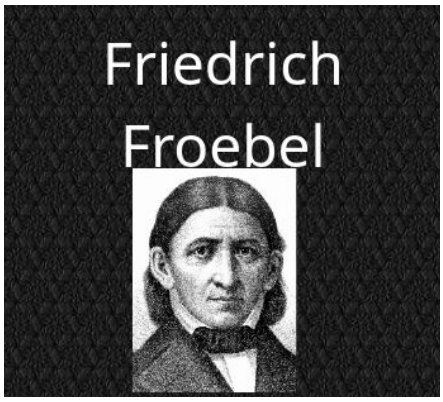
Maze 3

Skinner Vs Froebel! Who will take victory?





(Practical Psychology, 2023) (Cuellar)

Here's your chance to be the judge!

Round 1 - Learning

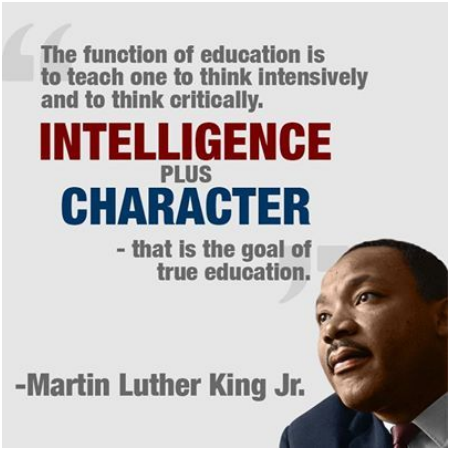
Constructivism focuses on the idea that;

- students create knowledge through learning experiences such as inquiry-based or problem-based practice
- navigating the zone of proximal development we can create tasks that push abilities without causing frustration/negativity to the child / learner.

Behaviourism is centred on the idea that;

- students learn through reactions to their behaviour or by observing the behaviour of others through praise (reward) or punishment
- we control with the use of repetitive practice and focuses on behaviours like memorization and association
- individuals do not use their brains to make decisions; instead, they merely follow instructions provided to them.

This perspective suggests that people's behaviours are solely driven by the environment and the consequences they experience.



Really speaking, both theorists relate to this quote by Dr. Martin Luther King.

Both emphasised on how environmental aspects were crucial for infants' growth and development (study.com, n.d) with Froebel concentrating on nature & the outdoors and Skinner focusing on reinforcers.

Round 2 - Role of instructor

Ever learned an activity without a teacher? Imagine going to swimming lessons and turning up to no instructor and having to jump into the pool and hope for the best. Would never happen, right? Neither Froebel or Skinner expect so either. Both theories require an instructor to allow learning to happen successfully. They are indeed different ways, but can be teachers/parents/guardians/peers/Most Knowledgeable Other (MKO) in either. (Flaticon, 2020)

What's important about being an instructor?

- ✅ Ensure safety for all participants
- ✅ Making sure they each participant learn the necessary skills / knowledge
- ✅ Establish & maintain a civil, inclusive, productive and stimulating learning environment

Indeed it's difficult to ensure all these factors are targeted all at once, therefore it is vital to use the correct techniques / practices.

Behaviourism is a strict teacher direct approach who delivers the information. The "teacher" is in control of what needs to be done, how it will be done and what changes need to be made.

Whereas with the use of constructivism, the teacher or instructor is a guide. "Teachers help encourage conversations and group sessions, assisting students to articulate their observations better to help them grasp more intricate concepts and increase their understanding of a given subject" (Tprestianni, 2023)

"I wanted to educate people to be free, to think, to take action for themselves". (Froebel in Lilley, 1967:41)

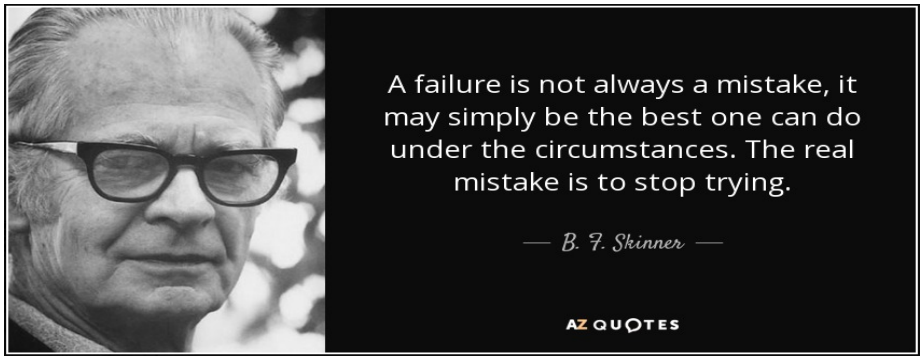
In the eyes of a parent it is hard not to interfere in a child's play. It is important for parents or any adult to know when to take a step back and wait for an invite to join in the play.. The amount of times a child has told me exactly what to say and what to do when playing dolls or tea parties, your instinct is to add another idea or play it out differently, however it is important that it is modelled when & how to intervene.

Round 3 - Role of Learner

Froebel's kindergarten theory revolutionised early childhood education by…

- emphasising the importance of allowing children to make decisions and think for themselves
- liberate children from limitations and encourage them to explore their capabilities
- acknowledge that children can learn valuable lessons from both good and bad decisions

In fact, learning from mistakes is just as crucial as learning from being right. Some argue that this concept aligns with behaviourism, where learning from mistakes is also emphasised, as it discourages punishment and focuses on understanding the consequences of actions.



(B.F.Skinner Foundation, 2022)

Constructivism is key here.
Students are reminded to:

- ask questions and engage in discussions, whether this be with their teacher or peers
- share their own perspectives (can be done at the start of a session to show their prior knowledge)

Constructivism "involves students taking an active role in their education by building on top of what they already know to deepen their understanding of new concepts and ideas" (Tprestianni,2023)

The concept of free will is an aspect that;

- ➔ is nurtured and encouraged in children
- ➔ allows learners to explore and make choices
- ➔ empower them to develop their own unique perspectives & ideas
- ➔ giving learners the freedom to construct and build their own knowledge
- ➔ become dependable and self-reliant
- ➔ learn to take ownership of their learning journey and develop critical thinking skills
- ➔ can thrive in an environment that nurtures their independence and fosters growth
- ➔ prepares children for a future where they can confidently navigate the complexities of life

Use of both theorists in the classroom will be beneficial for all students in their own ways. Sometimes to make it inclusive it may be best to integrate the two.

Results...

Who takes the WIN? DRAW? Try them out and play judge!

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Maze 4

A little extra help!

Everywhere, in all aspects, school life revolves around theories. Maybe you've thought of ideas while reading this blog. Maybe how you've used some of Froebel's / Skinner's ideas in your classroom or with your children at home or even when trying to improve yourself. With the New Year just arrived, maybe these theories can help you!

(Abby-design, n.d)

Constructivism Maze

Froebel's view on the relevance of PLAY remains EVIDENT and SIGNIFICANT TODAY.

How is a child supposed to UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE between hot / cold, hard / soft or red / yellow without being able to interact with these things?

(Lucyteachchildren,2020)

(freepik, n.d)

Make targets / assess their speech and language

Watching the children in their most comfortable situations helps to assess them.

It is through play that we witness children's greatest accomplishments & their unique characters.

Every day, children engage in various forms of play

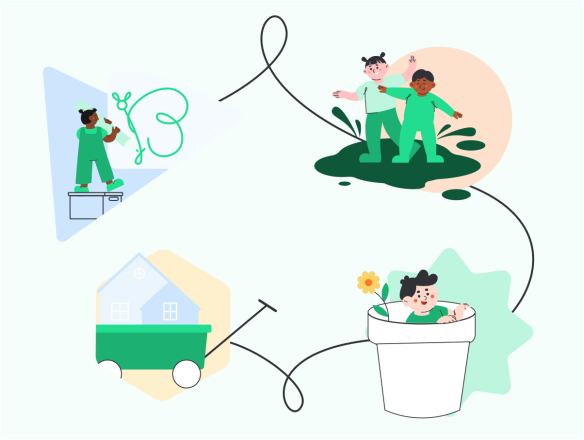
- imaginative
- Physical
- Social

Froebel recognized the immense value of play in fostering holistic growth and believed that it is through play children truly express themselves and discover their true potential.

We can also use this information to create a one page profile, you know, the things that we create and review all the time in schools.

Llun y Llanast - 'Messy Monday'

In the school I work in, there's something called 'Llun y Llanast' which is when the children dress themselves (we do help them too!) into waterproofs and participate in activities on the terms theme for example 'Sblish! Sblash! Sblosh!' (as you can imagine, all about water) and it's great! The children look forward to it every week!



By practising outdoor learning / learning through play, we are encouraging a child centred practice which results in an inclusive setting.

We're;

- create a learning environment that is appropriate for all
- differentiating levels of skill to develop in all activities (at their own pace!)
- increasing engagement in learning, pupils and individuals are more likely to take part as they are more comfortable
- increasing the probability of challenging themselves as they will see others succeed

"Every child has the right to play. This means every single child, whatever their culture, impairment, gender, language, background, behaviour or need"- (Play Wales, 2022)

Parents

Remember! Children look up to us as role models and it is vital that we show a healthy relationship between schools and ourselves.

Children are like parrots! They like to copy what we say.

Ever had a child say a 'bad word' in class and then you ask where did you hear that from and they say "mammy" or "daddy", it's the same concept about parent and teachers relationships and how we engage in their learning.

If we show interest in what they do in school / they're learning, children are more likely to want to participate e.g reading.

Behaviourism Maze

Before reading on, watch this video that nails Skinner's theory on the head!

The Big Bang Theory - Sheldon Trains Penny

Llun y Llanast - Messy Monday

Skinner's classical conditioning theory plays into the afternoon of 'Llun y Llanast' as the children have become conditioned to know they need to change into they're waterproofs after dinner.

Class management

Operant conditioning primarily finds its application in matters of class and student management, rather than the actual acquisition of learning content. (Mcleod, 2023)

when a bell rings - it serves as a cue for students to line up in order

This stimulus-response connection has become automatic over time ensuring a quick and efficient process. A bit like firefighters undergoing rigorous training to respond swiftly and effectively to emergencies. Practice makes perfect?

The problems of rewarding individuals solely lie in the need for punishment. While rewards can motivate and inspire, they may not always lead to desired outcomes. Without the use of punishment, individuals may become complacent, lacking the drive to improve or surpass expectations.

Whether you work in a school, parent or anyone who is caring for a child…

> "The teacher can often make the change from punishment to positive reinforcement in a surprisingly simple way—by responding to the student's successes rather than his failures." - (B. F. Skinner Foundation, 2019)

TEST

(Stefanlesik, 2023)

Tests

Can you remember anything from any tests you've completed? Maybe GCSE's, A Level's or Driving test (theory/practical)? Because I can't! Assessment through tests, as proposed by Skinner, primarily focuses on short-term memorization. The use of tests can effectively measure an individual's ability to recall information temporarily stored in their memory.

REMEMBER!

Not all students / individuals will benefit from the same reinforcement when it comes to behaviour e.g not all children will be able to link a smile as positive reinforcement / encouragement as they may think that you are laughing at them.

PUT THE CHILD FIRST!

A mixture of both theories could be the best decision? They'll definitely appreciate it!

Just wait and see how your life will change! A dream could become reality!

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