

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

To understand Carl Rogers' centred approach, we first need to understand the term Humanistic approach. This approach focuses on the whole person, emphasising the importance of their potential to make choices and develop themselves to reach their full potential (bacp.co.uk,2024). People have a natural ability to learn, and meaningful learning occurs when they can recognise when the topic is personally relevant to them. According to the American Psychological Association [apa.org], (2024), *"Carl Rogers was one of the founders of humanistic psychology. He developed the person-centred approach, also known as client-centred approach to psychotherapy, and established the concept of unconditional positive regard while pioneering the field of clinical psychological research"*. He believed if you are given the right conditions to learn, a person can reach their full potential and become their true self, this term is called 'self-actualisation'. Carl Rogers identified three key elements that he felt were of importance in relation to effective facilitation: 1. Congruence, meaning being true to yourself and not being afraid to express your feelings in an effort to establish a rapport with others, 2. Empathy, being willing to consider issues from the other person's point of view and 3. Respect, meaning to accept others for what they are in a non-critical and non-judgemental manner. (Bates,2023, p.64). In an educational setting, Rogers believed that teachers, along with support staff, should seek to create emotionally warm, supportive environments, he also suggested that students will come to love learning (Gtce.org, 2008). Abraham Maslow like Rogers, also believed in a person-centred approach. However, unlike Rogers, Maslow believed that an individual must have their physiological needs met first. He went on to develop Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, he believed that there were 5 main stages you would need to fulfil before you could reach your full potential these being 1. Physical, meaning basic survival needs referring to food, warmth and rest, 2. Psychological, meaning freedom from fear 3. Affiliation, meaning a sense of belonging 4. Esteem, self-belief and finally 5. Self-fulfilment meaning to reach one's full potential. Maslow argued that progression to the higher levels was not possible until the lower-level needs had been met. (Bates, 2023, p.66).

Gerard Egan, also a Humanist theorist, describes the role of a 'Skilled Helper' to support the client to transfer newly acquired skills and knowledge to problem solve. He explains how active listening and empathy play a key role in providing the client with warmth comfort and safety to facilitate positive change (Nelson,2007).

Whilst Maslow and Rogers approaches are focused on internal points of personal growth, Egan's approach focuses more on practical guidance to direct individuals on how to actively work through

their individual challenges for personal development, a clear structured method for self-growth and personal development. Although their approaches are different, their theories complement in each other offering varied but interconnected perspectives on human growth. Together these theories offer a humanist view of how people can reach their full potential through key elements focusing on the end goal of self-actualisation.

In today's educational setting you can find the work of Rogers and Maslow being adapted to better support our learners. Rogers' Person-centred approach can be modified to suit the needs of the child in education, this involves placing the student at the centre of the decision-making process, in Wales this process is known as the Person-Centred Planning meeting or PCP. One-page profiles provide staff with an overview of the pupil, describing their strengths and weakness giving an overview for staff members on how best to support the individual. These profiles are then shared with all educational staff within the individual's educational setting, ensuring that everyone involved in a child's education is correctly informed and can provide the support required and have a better understanding of their needs. *'this profile contains key information about the individual's character, gifts and talents, what is important to them, and the best way to support them'* This additional learning needs code for Wales 2021 states that it *"Reflects the ethos of person centred practice. Person centred practice puts the child, child parents or young person at the centre of decisions"* (Welsh Government, 2021) The code of practice also suggests using online tools to enable practitioners to get to know the student on a one to one level, such tools can be found on the Welsh Government website an example of this would be the 'What's working and not working thinking tool' the information gathered using this tool can be extremely useful when planning the individual's one page profile. Unlike teachers who have 25 to 30 students in the classroom at one time, LSA and TA have the opportunity to work more closely with students on a one-to-one basis gaining the students trust and, therefore have more of an insight into that child's needs making them the ideal person to support the student when writing their profile.

The person-centred therapeutic approach and other humanist theories provide valuable insights that can greatly support the practice of TAs and LSAs in schools fostering an environment where students can thrive not just academically but emotionally. In today's educational setting, the roles of teaching assistants and learning support assistants have become increasingly vital, not just in the classroom but also to help support students' needs throughout their daily lives as teachers and support staff strive to create a more inclusive environment that supports the diverse needs of all students.

Within educational setting A, we can observe practice that reflects the theories discussed above. An example of this is a well-being hub within educational setting A providing food and drink for

vulnerable students allowing them to support their physical needs whilst nurturing their mental and emotional care needs, this lends itself to Maslow's Hierarchy of needs. In many primary schools the government funds breakfast clubs (Welsh Government, 2022). The well-being hub in setting A also provides a safe space where there are specially trained support staff which includes teaching assistants (TA) and learning support assistants (LSA's) who are there to support the students' emotional and physical needs. This creates an environment where students feel open to talk more freely regarding their emotional needs, giving them a sense of feeling heard and validated. This provision also supports small groups of students who are struggling within the mainstream setting, providing a more nurtured approach to learning, giving both emotional and academic support. By building positive relationships with students both teaching assistants (TA's) and learning support Assistants (LSA's) can help promote a positive learning environment where students feel confident and motivated to succeed academically, this lends itself to Carl Rogers Person-centred approach as he believed that emotional well-being is critical for personal growth. By having specially trained staff to support our students in education we can raise the standards in educational setting as a whole, as staff are more informed of the students' personal needs *"There is evidence that appropriately-trained and supported staff such as teachers, school nurses, counsellors, and teaching assistants can achieve results comparable to those achieved by trained therapists in delivering a number of interventions addressing mild to moderate mental health problems (such as anxiety, conduct disorder, substance use disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder)"* (trauma-informed schools UK, no date). One such trained intervention that is provided in setting A and used widely within educational settings throughout the United Kingdom is Emotional Literacy support also known as ELSA, this is a recognised training course aimed specifically at Teaching Assistants or other specialist school roles. ELSAs are there to support the children and a young person's emotional development whilst also helping them cope with life's challenges. These sessions are delivered over 6 weeks. Sessions start with an emotional check in to see how the students are feeling within themselves and their environments, relationships between students and ELSA are key in helping children and young people to feel safe and nurtured. ELSA is about creating a reflective space for the child or young person. (Elsa support, 2024) this intervention reflects the work of Rogers, Maslow and Egan by providing a safe supportive environment allowing them to express their feelings and needs in a more informal setting on a one-to-one basis with the ELSA.

In conclusion the person-centred approach promoted by Carl Rogers and other humanists approaches significantly improves the educational experiences of students within educational settings. By highlighting Rogers' 3 main points: empathy, acceptance, and authentic communication, educational settings can provide a supportive environment that promotes both academic success and emotional well-being. While there are still challenges with the implication of the approach, for example with recent cutbacks on staffing in education, this then leads to not having enough trained staff available and unfortunately support staff are the first to be affected. The potential benefits for students ranging from improved engagement and emotional skills to reduced behavioural issues, highlighting the importance of incorporating personal centred approach principles into educational environments. As education settings continues to progress, embracing person-centred approaches may be key to nurturing well-rounded, resilient, and capable individuals prepared to thrive in an increasingly complicated world.

References:

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