

Critically analyse how key theories contribute to effective classroom management

Classroom management is something that all teachers do and is often used in order to keep children on task, organised and to promote academic success (Glossary of Education Reform, 2014). A huge aspect of classroom management is behaviour, it is vital to ensure that there is an understanding of the root cause of undesirable behaviours within the classroom as this will support a behaviour management strategy forming effectively (Department for Education and Skills, 2012). There are five basic models that help in understanding a child's behaviour and each of them helps to explain behaviour in a different way, the models are:

- **Biological** – Nature and nurture influence children and so close attention must be paid to creating a positive environment and positive experiences, which will promote good behavior.
- **Behavioral** – Behavior can be modified through two types of conditioner, Classical and Operant as demonstrated by Pavlov and Skinner.
- **Cognitive** – Fight or Flight responses are identified within this model, suggesting that a person's behavior is influenced by their thought process,
- **Systemic** – the quality of a person's systems (Family, Schools, Friends, Classmates, Community) can influence their behavior.
- **Psychodynamic** – By focusing on a person's conscious and unconscious past experiences it is possible to deal with them appropriately and develop good behavior.

(Department for Education and Skills, 2012)

The skills required to become an effective classroom manager include, a willingness to support and guide learners when they meet a challenge (Mansor, et al, 2012), acknowledging and respecting the diversity of a class (Loeser, 2014), the ability to develop interpersonal relationships with children in their class (Dicke, et al, 2015), the ability to emphasis expectations within the classroom, and the capability to develop a strong system that addresses behaviours within the classroom (Kratochwill, DeRoos and Blair, 2014). The key features of an effectively managed classroom include a teacher who possesses the skills written above, an effective

routine for managing materials, time and behaviour (Radenacher, et al, 1998). It is also suggested that consistency is an essential aspect to effective classroom management. Radenacher, et al (1998) also makes the suggestion that a child will rarely rebel against a teacher who is consistent with their consequences within the classroom, for both positive and negative situations.

Within this piece of writing Two theorists with ideas relating to classroom management will be analysed. The first is Alfie Kohn, a modern-day theorist who developed his ideas around education, parenting and human behaviour, as seen through several of his published works, Punished by Rewards (1999), No Contest (1986) and The Homework Myth (2006). Second is Haim Ginott, a theorist who wrote three books that look at relationships. The books titled, Between Parent and Child (1965), Between Parent and Teenager (1967) and Teacher and Child (1972) each look at different relationships and emphasise the impact positive relationships and communication can have on children and young people and the effects of such in effective classroom and behaviour management.

Alfie Kohn

Alfie Kohn's theory could be viewed as a disagreement with 'social norms'. Within his book 'No Contest', he expressed his view that people treat all aspects of life as a competition. He describes his view using several statements, such as competition being a common denominator of life and the objectification of individuals being used to conquer and be better than them (Kohn, 1986). Kohn also expresses an opinion regarding behaviourism. Within his book 'Punished by Rewards' Kohn expresses his understanding that ideas can be admired for a number of reasons but believes that when that idea becomes the socially expected norm it should be feared (Kohn, 1999). This would lead to the suggestion that Kohn disagrees entirely with the concept of behaviourism in practice. This idea is developed further within his writing, as he extends on the previous point. Kohn states that despite the insistent belief of many, behaviourism is not the way the world works and therefore should not be accepted as the basis for any desired behaviour to develop from (Kohn, 1999). The final book that will be referred to from Kohn's published works is 'The homework Myth'. This book details Kohn's views regarding homework and its effects on children and those around the child. Kohn expresses strong views regarding the effects of

homework suggesting that it is a burden to parents, an added stress for children, an influencer of family conflict, and believes that it decreases the time a child can spend doing other activities as well as decreasing interest in learning (Kohn, 2006). His writing also suggests the opinion that despite the belief of homework as a promoter of self-discipline, increased responsibility and an aid to higher achievement, these factors aren't sustained by sufficient evidence (Kohn, 2006). By collating the ideas formed within these three books it can be said that Kohn's theory about classroom management promotes a co-operation between learner and teacher in comparison to a hierarchy, and the use of child-led experiences based on interest and curiosity should be the main motivators in learning.

This theory can be seen in a real classroom context through schools with ethos and teaching methods that promote child-led and child-centred learning. The Montessori style of teaching is one that possesses these characteristics. A Montessori school focuses on child-directed learning, this is due to the benefits it showed during the developmental stages of the teaching style (Montessori St Nicholas, No Date). It was seen that by allowing children the freedom to learn in a hands-on environment they were able to become happy, self-motivated learners that could form positive self-images as confident and successful people, it was also observed that the style of teaching encouraged learners to be independent and encouraged a love for learning (Montessori St Nicholas, No Date).

In a more generalized context, the theories of Kohn can be seen in the National Foundation Phase Curriculum in several aspects. It is stated within the Foundation Phase Curriculum that learning should be balanced between child-initiated and practitioner directed activities (Department for Education and Skills, 2015) and that learners should have the opportunity to be curious and investigate both indoor and outdoor learning environments (Department for Education and Skills, 2015). These points show the current acknowledgment of the importance of child-led learning in a modern-day classroom, as well as acknowledgment of Kohn's ideas regarding appropriate motivators for learning.

Within the National Curriculum there is no mention of rewards in the classroom, this would suggest that they are not an essential aspect of teaching and learning as Kohn has suggested is the norm, however the topic has been discussed by Estyn. A

best practice example provide by Estyn (2016) discusses the use of emotional support for pupils as a method of improving well-being, attainment and behaviour. "Emotional Literacy support assistants work very closely with pupils requiring support and give them the tools to settle into their learning and participate fully in school life" (Estyn, 2016), although a traditional reward isn't involved here it may be suggested that the emotional support is being used for this purpose, as it guides the children to behave in a way that is desired. This best practice review goes against the views of Kohn and would suggest that the use of rewards is beneficial as it enables teachers to encourage desired behaviour and therefore a desired way of learning. There are a number of theories that would also promote the use of rewards in teaching and learning, such as Skinner who developed a theory regarding operant conditioning (Skinner, 1938, cited in Nutbrown, Clough and Selbie, 2008) and Pavlov who developed a theory regarding classical conditioning. Each of these theories show an opposing view to that of Holt and highlight the effects of behaviourism as an effective classroom management technique.

Although the theory composed by Kohn is supported in several ways by national Government and Estyn, there are also critiques of his ideas. Willingham (2009) is one academic who has made suggestions of Kohn's downfalls identifying Kohn's factual errors and oversimplification of literatures. One of Kohn's suggestions is that homework is not a useful strategy in supporting a child's learning, this is argued against by Willingham (2009) who suggests that Kohn's reasoning is not supported by sufficient research in comparison to the literature that would support the use of homework. A theorist who has an opposing view to that of Kohn is B.F. Skinner, who's theory of behaviourism focused on rewards suggests that the benefits to the theory in practice are vast. The theory, that was originally developed from tests on rats suggests that through issuing rewards and sanctions, desired behaviour can be encouraged, and negative behaviours can be discouraged (B.F. Skinner, 1953, Cited in, Sheehy, 2004).

Overall Holt's theory can seem like an idealistic strategy for effectively managing a classroom. Whilst encouraging learners to be self-motivated and non-competitive in theory would be a wonderful experience for children within a school setting, it could be argued that successful self-motivated learning is only possible when strategies are implemented effectively alongside the foundation of teaching content and skills in

order to enable learning to be self-motivated (Education Endowment Foundation, 2019). Should this be done successfully these approaches can support an increase in pupil attainment as well as self-motivation to learn.

Haim Ginott

Haim Ginott's theory focuses on setting boundaries and limits for children and suggests that through compassion and positive communication, it is possible to encourage positive and desirable behaviour, he believed that an unacceptable child does not exist, rather unacceptable behaviours (Ginott, 2003). The theory Ginott composed highlights the benefits of communication between adult and child and encourages the promotion of positive relationships as an effective way of managing behaviour both at home and in the classroom (Ginott, 1972). Ginott's work in several roles such as a clinical psychologist and a child therapist allowed him to work with vulnerable children which supported the development of his theories and their effectiveness in practice, that lead him on to publish his ideas in writing for the benefit of others working with children (Orgel, 1980).

In many schools across Wales communication, boundaries and positive relationships are viewed as an integral aspect to effective classroom management, these themes are seen through the guidance and expectations set out within the foundation phase framework. Within the Foundation Phase Framework, it is stated under the 'Personal and social development, well-being and cultural diversity' area of learning outcomes that children should be able to "respond appropriately to consistent boundaries" (Department for Education and Skills, 2015, p. 50). Within this Area of Learning there is also mention of the relationships a child has, and it is stated that children should learn about their relationships with both their peers and adults in and outside of the school setting (Department for Education, 2015). In a broader context relating to communication the foundation phase framework includes the 'Language Literacy and Communication' area of learning. This section of the document discusses communication in a variety of ways, but the overarching theme is that communication should be positive and encouraged in order to develop skills and interpersonal relationships between both peers and adults (Department for Education and Skills, 2015). All of these aspects combined would suggest that in the current education system in Wales Ginott's theory is adopted and supported.

Whilst it is encouraging to see the aspects of Ginott's theory within the current framework for education it may be useful to refer to Estyn's effective practice examples too in order to be certain that schools are implementing the theory as it is suggested within the Foundation Phase document. Estyn (2018 a) have referred to a school that pride themselves on a positive and inclusive ethos. The setting based in Swansea are said to have strengths in both their inclusive ethos and their facilitation of pupil voice (Estyn, 2018 a). The effective implementation of pupil voice could show that this school work within the parameters of Ginott's theory, especially with his belief of positive communication between adult and child. Pupil voice allows children to express their opinions and thoughts regarding school matters and can be an effective tool in developing positive relationships (Bragg, 2007). Another setting that Estyn have referred to as an example of effective practice has shown their abilities in promoting healthy and positive relationships as a means of promoting both well-being and positive behaviour (Estyn, 2018 b). The setting that is located in Carmarthenshire allow children to access and participate in intervention sessions that support them in developing self-control skills, promotes positive attitudes and allows children to share their concerns and feelings in a safe and supportive environment (Estyn, 2018 b). This effective practice example supports the theory of Ginott through the promotion of positive relationships and the benefits they have on behaviour and classroom management. Estyn (2018, b) have stated that the implementation of strategies seen in this setting has "contributed to raising standards of well-being among pupils and staff, and improved pupils behaviour across the school".

Further research around the key themes of Ginott's theory can be useful in deciphering whether or not it is an effective theory in practice. The key themes from the theory that will be investigated further include positive relationships and communication. It has been suggested that teacher – student relationships that are non-directive, empathetic and overall positive, can encourage thinking and learning and are shown to have a connection to increased participation and overall student satisfaction (Roffey, 2012). This could lead on to the suggestion that a classroom with satisfied and participating students is a classroom that is well-managed (Freeman, et al, 2015) further suggesting that Ginott's theory in practice is shown to be effective and practical.

Whilst Ginott's theory seems to be effective and widely used in classrooms across Wales, there are those who criticise his work and question the effectiveness of his theory in practice. Roebuck (2002) has suggested that Ginott's theory in regards to communication is far too broad to be applicable to all students, it is based on the assumption that all children are able to communicate effectively in the beginning and therefore doesn't take into consideration the requirements of children with additional learning needs, in particular relating to language and communication. Another who has spoken about Ginott's theory of communication in the classroom is Manning and Bucher (2001) they have suggested that a teacher will benefit from having a significant ability to be consistent in their implementation of the theory, which may only be successful with many years' experience as a teacher. This could lead to the assumption that in order to effectively conduct Ginott's theory in a classroom a teacher must have experience within the field, which is an unfortunate finding for newly qualified teachers. McDaniel (2008) has also reviewed Ginott's work, and has noted that whilst Ginott's theory is based around behaviour and classroom management, Ginott himself did not train as a teacher, nor did he teach in a classroom, which has led to the critique that he couldn't possibly guide teachers in how to manage a classroom seeing as he has not done so himself (McDaniel, 2008). Overall it seems that Ginott's theory could be seen as presumptuous and exclusive, especially for younger children and those with additional needs.

Whilst only two classroom management theories have been discussed here there are an abundance of others that investigate other areas of classroom management and in different ways. The two discussed in this piece of writing have enabled the writer to increase their own understanding of effective practice in managing a classroom, and the practical implication of such effective practice. Both Kohn and Ginott's theories can be useful in developing effective practice, however for successful implementation of classroom management the use of several strategies and guidance may be more beneficial than adopting a single theorist's recommendation. Through positive relationships, encouraging child-led experiences and a partnership between teacher and child an efficiently managed classroom could be achieved as well as promoting learning and enjoyment. All though a theory is simply an idea someone has formed, the ones discussed in this piece of writing can

be effective in classroom management, if they are adopted with the needs of individual pupils in mind as a priority, not giving homework and letting children lead their own learning may sound like an ideal classroom but there are still standards that are expected to be met, and whilst positive relationships and communication can be fantastic aids to learning and behaviour management, they cannot be expected from day one and need to be worked on consistently to be strong and effective.

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