

ECIE4012

**The Principles of Learning and
Teaching**

Portfolio

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Blog 1

Why does the saying "One-size-fits-all" not apply in the classroom!



(Downey, 2018)

Introduction

Have you ever heard of the saying 'one size fits all'? This saying is not true when it comes to children's learning! As educator and poet Robert John Meehan once quoted;

EVERY CHILD'S LEARNING STYLE AND PACE IS DIFFERENT.

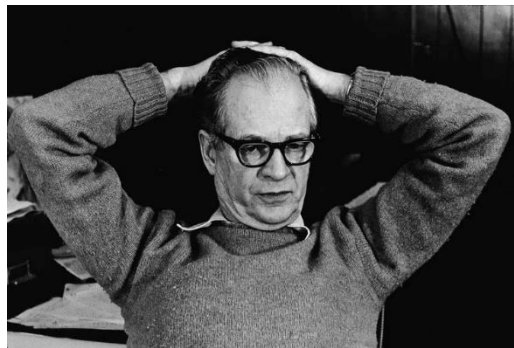
EACH CHILD IS UNIQUE, CAPABLE NOT ONLY OF LEARNING

BUT ALSO OF SUCCEEDING (Writer, 2022).

Do you often think that one pedagogy does not facilitate all your learners' needs? then read on to find how you can adapt your pedagogy to deliver to learners within your effective classroom.....

As a well-trained and motivated educator, we regularly draw on learning theories to support their promotion of child-centred inclusive practice (UNICEF 2014). There are many different education theories that we as educationists follow to assist us in delivering an inclusive curriculum to our learners.

Today, I will discuss American behaviourist theorist B.F. Skinner (1904- 1990).



(Cherry, 2020).

First, let's look at Behaviourism. Behaviourism is a learning theory suggesting all behaviours can be conditioned via an external stimulus, for example, the surrounding environment is a vital component in influencing behaviour (Blakemore & Frith 2005).

✓ Skinner believed that all human behaviour was a direct outcome of conditioning and that the concept of free choice was a myth (Cherry, 2020).

✓ Renowned for his 'Operant Conditioning' theory, expanded his theory from Thorndike's (1898) Law of effect and Ivan Pavlov (1849-1946) 'Classical Conditioning' (Mcleod, 2023).

✓ 'Operant Conditioning' is the concept of positive reinforcement as a response or behaviour reinforced through rewards which promote the repeating of appropriate behaviour and punishment for eliminating any unwanted behaviours within children and animals. He called this a reinforcing stimulus (Mcleod, 2023).

Thinking inside Skinners' box

Whilst developing his 'Operant Conditioning' theory Skinner (1948) analysed animal behaviour by placing rats and pigeons into a locked box, among other things inside the box was a lever or button (external stimuli) the lever or button if pressed granted the animal food or water (Cherry, 2020).

If you would like to know more in depth about Operant Conditioning, then watch this short video: <https://youtu.be/ne6o-uPJArA> (Sprouts, 2020).

So, how can Skinner's theory be used in your classroom today?



(Unsplash, 2020).

- Learners must have clear ideas of what behaviours are to be encouraged and reinforced (Smith, 2017).
- The use of positive and negative stimuli, educators can condition children's behaviour. (Smith, 2017).
- The Stimuli can vary depending on each individual and the behaviour you are reinforcing or eliminating (Smith, 2017).
- Child centred approach used before awarding reinforcers as they can differ for each learner (Smith, 2017).

The 4 elements of Operant Conditioning

The table below gives a visual explanation of 'Operant Conditioning' 4 elements, these work collaboratively to mold an individual's behaviour (Main, 2022).

	Something “ Bad ” (aversive)	Something “ Good ” (rewarding)
Giving (positive)	Positive Punishment (behavior is weakened)	Positive Reinforcement (behavior is strengthened)
Taking Away (negative)	Negative Reinforcement (behavior is strengthened)	Negative Punishment (behavior is weakened)

(Main, 2022)

Do you use Operant condition within your classroom? Perhaps you do without even realising?

Why would we deliver a one-size-fits-all lesson to a varied set of learners if we wish to make learning more accessible and equitable?

Stages not ages



(University College London, 2018).

Like adult's children learn at different stages in their lives;

One theory does not fit all learners, but with the

- correct child-centred approach,
- individual support
- monitoring of their progression steps,

every child can be;

- ∞ Ambitious capable learners
- ∞ Healthy, confident individuals
- ∞ Ethical, informed citizens
- ∞ Enterprising, creative contributors

(GOV.WALES, 2020).

As psychologist Dr. Thomas Goldstein once remarked, "The principles of operant conditioning, when used judiciously, have the power to shape behavior in ways that foster growth and personal development." (Main, 2022).

Children are more likely to thrive if they are challenged appropriately regardless of their age (University College London, 2018).

Remember that 'no one theory is correct' but with your professional expertise and the right child-centred approach your learners could benefit from Operant Conditioning to enhance their learning journey.

Even though Skinners' theory was created decades ago it is still infused within our learning environment today. Can you expand your pedagogy and use it in your classroom today?

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Blog2

Lev Vygotsky & Socio-Cultural theory

In this post, I will discuss social constructivism focusing on Lev Vygotsky, socio-cultural theory of learning (1896 – 1934) to see if you can cascade his theory into your learning environment.



(Williams, 2022)

Vygotsky theory of Socio-Cultural influenced the approaches to learning and how educators think about learning and teaching. He believed that:

- social interaction is key to learning and cognition development
- all individuals are born with basic cognitive abilities
- Individuals' social interactions throughout their lives

can create and enhance their own learning, knowledge and growth from their initial inborn level (Blakemore & Frith, 2005).

There may be a greater achievement gap between children from homes with low socio-economic status and their peers if there are fewer socio-economic or socio-cultural interactions (Poletti, 2020). This has been particularly noticeable in our classrooms post-Covid 2019. Social interaction enhances and gives regular opportunities for our learners to develop social knowledge and cognitive development (Blakemore & Frith, 2005).

However, during the pandemic, most children had little if any social interaction with their peers, extended family or Teachers this inevitably proved a drastic decrease in cognitive and academic performance (Berndt, 2002). Vygotsky's theory (1978) suggests language plays a powerful role in shaping thoughts, but during the pandemic children were barely interacting

with anyone other than their caregivers and that may have been limited due to working from home (Berndt, 2002).



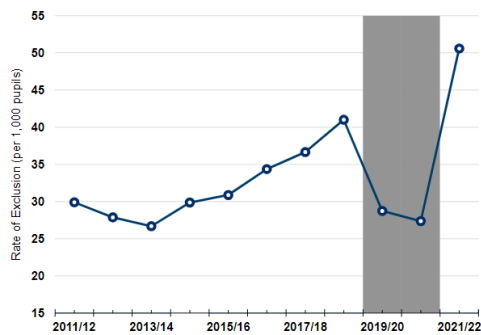
(Williams, 2021).

Have you noticed a shift in behaviours in your classroom since the pandemic?

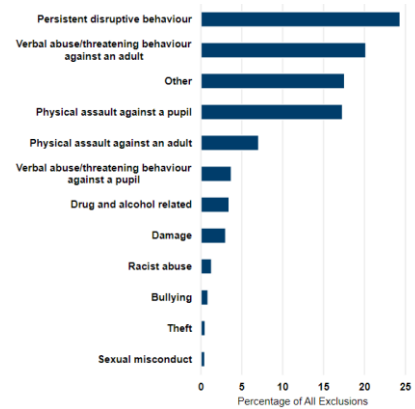
Look at the graphs below from the Welsh Government showing the exclusion rate within schools and the reasons in Wales since the pandemic - as you can see exclusions have greatly risen.

Rates of exclusions 5 days or less

Reasons for exclusions



(GOV.WALES,2023).



Vygotsky suggested that the people we learn best from are known as ‘More Knowledgeable Others’ (MKOs) this is someone who has a better understanding of a specific subject.

The More Knowledgeable Other could be;

- peers,
- parents,
- teachers,
- family members
- wider community.

Children may have limited life experiences but can improve their knowledge and understanding when effectively collaborating with a more able MKO. (Bates, 2019).

The child is not seen as a lone learner but as part of a group (Blakemore & Frith, 2005).

As with many aspects of our lives, we all need an MKO to model the process both verbally and physically, we often use ‘What a good one looks like’ (WAGOLL) in our classroom. I often show our learners what is expected of them for the specific task that has been set. This is a form of scaffolding and can help the learners gain a better understanding of cognitive development to

take place. This is exceptionally useful for visual learners. Me included; I much prefer to visualise what is expected of a task I am given to complete as it helps me to retain the information.

How do you prefer to learn? Are you a visual, Auditory, Tactile, or a Kinesthetic learner?

I regularly encourage group work with an MKO in our setting for example, we have Sports leaders who are taught sports games to develop hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills from an MKO (Sports Ambassador). The Sports Leaders acting as the MKO using the appropriate language and skills collaboratively teach the younger children these specific games at playtime through social interaction. All their senses are being hit and are more memorable as a result. These games are differentiated depending on the child's age and ability to support inclusion (GOV.WALES, 2016).



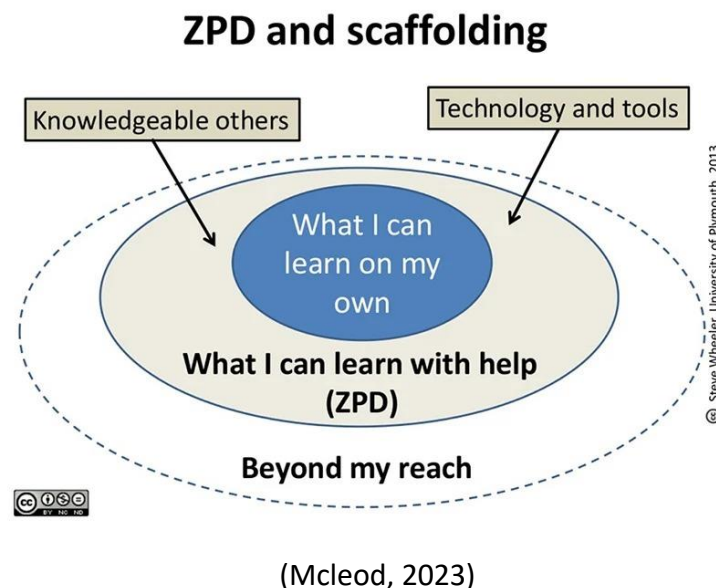
(McCarney, 2015).

Cast your mind back to when you were a child. Did anyone ignite your cognitive development on a specific topic?

Zone of Proximity Development

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximity Development (ZPD) (1978) displays what a child can do with or without help and what they can achieve with the support of an MKO (an adult or a child) (Blakemore & Frith, 2005).

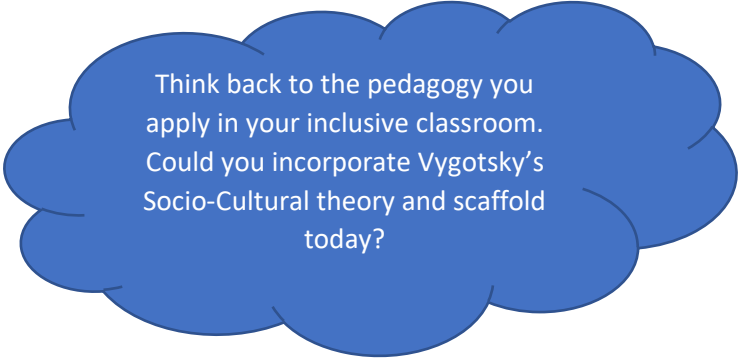
Dixon-Krauss (1996) describes the zone of proximal development as “encompassing the gap between the child’s level of actual development determined by independent problem solving, and her level of potential development determined by problem solving, supported by an adult or through collaboration with more capable peers”.



Examples of Social constructivism in our classrooms you may find useful

- By forming positive relationships with your learners and consistently evaluating their abilities and cognitive development you can implement Vygotsky’s Zone of proximity by scaffolding (Mcleod, 2023).
- Scaffolding can aid children to learn and understand through social interaction and boost their cognitive learning (Mcleod, 2023). You may scaffold by explaining any new vocabulary before your learners read a new text. This is known as Vygotsky’s ‘Level of Potential Development’, with the help from the MKO (Teacher) explaining the new vocabulary raises the child into the ‘Zone of Proximal Development’ the child can transfer their skills and knowledge and complete the task independently which is known as Vygotsky’s ‘Level of Actual Development’ (Kurt, 2020).

Frequently practising peer reading, the learners read together and support each other with terms they do not understand or cannot read as well as their peers. However, some learners prefer auditory learning. They can listen to a story through headphones with a peer and follow a story on an electronic device, then answer relevant questions at the end of each chapter to recall the information they have read. These are examples of inclusive practice within our setting (Strategic Equality Plan, 2023).



Think back to the pedagogy you apply in your inclusive classroom. Could you incorporate Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural theory and scaffold today?

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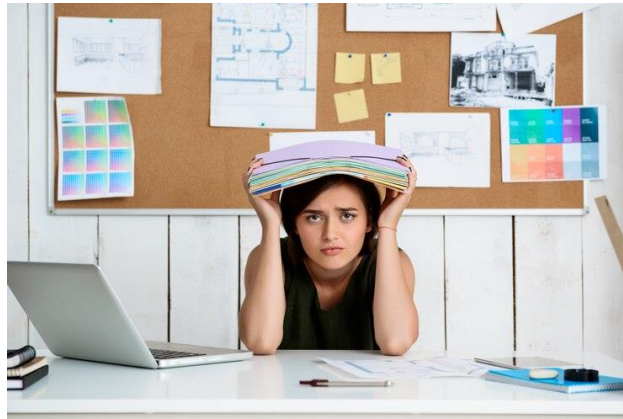
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Blog 3

Feeling overwhelmed by the different approaches to learning in our classrooms? You're not alone!



(Freepik, 2020).

Read on as I identify and evaluate the theories between 2 well known Education philosophers B.F Skinner (1904-1990) and Lev Vygotsky (1896- 1934) and their advantages and disadvantages while using in the classroom.

So, what does Skinners Operant conditioning (1953) look like in action?

Skinner believed that children would learn behaviours that are reinforced by specific reinforcement only if the reinforcers are awarded or sanctioned immediately after the desired behaviour is displayed.

Reinforcers should be individualised and delivered when the learner has made sincere efforts within a given task not when the learner is perfect (Smith, 2017).



Social reinforcers

- Positive praise
- Verbal feedback such as, “good job” or “I can see you are trying your best”
- written acknowledgement such as “great perseverance today”.
- A reprimand such as a high five or a smile.

(Cruz and Cruz, 2023).

Advantages

Person centred (GOV.WALES, 2015).



Disadvantages

A smile to a child with Mindblindness (Baron-Cohen, 1997) may not understand the meaning of a smile therefore the smile would not be a useful reinforcer.

Activity reinforcers

- Playing a board game
- Listening to music
- Computer / Ipad time

Advantages

can be beneficial as allowing the learner to choose a preferred activity can be effective, even more so if they can choose a friend to accompany them (GOV.WALES, 2015).

Disadvantages

Some learners may rush their work with no effort to simply play on the computer or play a game or only complete the task with extrinsic motivation to receive the reward again or to avoid punishment (Lepper and Henderlong, 2000).

Tangible reinforcers

- toys
- stickers,
- certificates,
- hot chocolate with the head
- phone call home to parents

Advantages

All powerful motivators of reinforcement if used only when children go over and above with their behaviours/efforts (Gray & Macblain, 2015).

Disadvantages

Can have an adverse effect if used excessively, as they can lead to a loss of dependence (Lepper & Henderlong, 2000) and negatively affect both relationships and intrinsic motivation (Kohn, 1993).

Token reinforcement

- house points
- tokens
- reward charts

Advantages

Little intrinsic worth however when swapped for a choice of activities at the end of each term such as a class disco, or a class trip to the park for their overall award for collecting the most house points or tokens.

✖ Disadvantages

Can be thought of as bribery and does not give the child any chance of free will (Blakemore & Frith, 2005).

“men act upon the world, and change it,
and are changed in turn by the
consequences of their action”
(Skinner, 1957/1978).

B.F. Skinner's (1953) theoretical principles are still prevalent throughout education today particularly implemented for behaviour modification (Dobson & Melrose, 2020).



(Thomas, 2021).

Vygotsky believed to ignite and develop cognitive learning children need social interaction from;

- Educators
- Peers

- Parents/ caregivers
- Wider community

(Blakemore & Frith, 2005).

Advantages

- Language shapes understanding
- working/learning with/from others
- Learning how to behave on the yard with their peers/siblings
- Model respect – children return it
- Child-centred
- Culutral

(Blakemore & Frith, 2005).

Disadvantages

- Ignores individualism (Ameri, 2020).
- Non-existence of free-will (Dahlbom, 1984).

(Positive Discipline Plan,2023) (Equality Strategic Plan,2023).

Both Vygotsky and Skinner demonstrate that social contact promotes learning and growth. Vygotsky says learning occurs first and develops into progress through social interactions. While Skinner equates learning to development through conditioning (Pasqualotto, *et al* 2015).

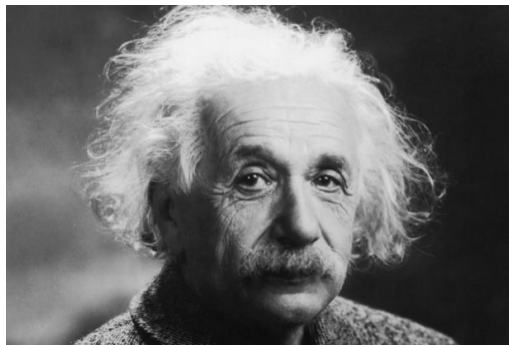


(Betancour, 2018)

We are all human!

As Dr Eva once said; "Children may learn more if we accept, and study mistakes made in the classroom" (Eva, 2017).

After all we as adults learn from our own mistakes, I often make mistakes (Don't we all?) in fact we encourage mistakes as it's all an important part of the learning process and helps develop resilience and self-esteem (Blakemore & Frith, 2005). Skinner (1953) says we should avoid making mistakes.



(Hope, 2023).

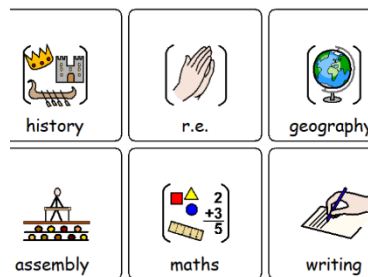
As Albert Einstein once said;

“A person who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new” (Dukas & Hoffman, 1979).

Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (1978) promoted scaffolding within his theory, to support learners' cognitive development scaffolding can be used though visuals, visual timetable;



(Diana and Diana, 2023).



(PDF,965.08 KB, no date).

“Joint attention and shared problem solving is needed to create a process of cognitive, social, and emotional interchange” (Hausfather,1996).

Do you use Vygotsky’s / Skinner’s theory in your classroom? What strategies do you include within your pedagogy?

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Blog 4

Personalised Pedagogy

As educators we recognise teaching is a non-linear process, with unique and diverse learners all at different stages it can seem such a challenging job (UNICEF, 2014).



(Freestock, no date).

However, with your personalised pedagogy and implementation of famous theories, you can develop every child's learning and prepare them for their adult life.

I use Skinner's (1937) operant conditioning theory daily to modify behaviours within the classroom and beyond.



(Learning Performance, 2023).

What Skinner (1937) strategies am I using in my classroom today?

Positive reinforcement;

- house points
- tokens and stickers
- Certificates
- hot chocolate with the headmaster
- Class Dojo intervention
- positive praise
- reprimands
- phone call home to parents
- reward charts
- privileges

Negative reinforcement;

- loss of privilege
- email to parents
- removal of toy
- delayed playtime

(Positive Discipline Policy, 2023) (Strategic Equality Plan,2023) (GOV.WALES,2018).

What Vygotsky's (2012) strategies am I using in my classroom today?

Zone of Development

- modelling
- instructing
- feedback
- questioning
- group work
- peer marking
- peer assessing
- peer reading

Scaffolding

- Read Write Inc intervention
- Visual aids
- Encourage questions
- Encourage mistakes
- differentiate
- ignite previous knowledge
- forest school
- Voice 21

- repetition
- Jigsaw experts (4 pupils)
- Donought sharing
- assisting/facilitating
- Sports Ambassadors
- real-life experiences

(Positive Discipline Policy, 2023) (Strategic Equality Plan, 2023) (GOV.WALES,2018).

All these strategies are child-centred to promote inclusion within our learning environment (GOV.WALES, 2018) (Positive Discipline Plan, 2023), (Strategic Equality Plan, 2023). A wide range of resources are available to differentiate children's learning and to maximise their cognitive development (Blakemore & Frith, 2005).



(Raffo,2017).

Every child has a right to an education whether they have special needs or not (UNICEF, 2022).

Sharing, modelling, language and displaying respect are essential tools for a child's understanding (Blakemore & Frith, 2005).

Support the creation of a fully inclusive education system where ALL learners are given opportunity to an education that meets their needs and enables them to participate in, benefit from, and enjoy learning (GOV.WALES, 2018).

I think we all have a bit of Vygotsky/Skinner in us, through social interaction, modelling language, working collaboratively both verbally and physically, and offering rewards/sanctions to enhance learners' cognitive abilities we are displaying their principles.

Do you use any of the strategies above?

Perhaps you use do, is there any of your strategies that are not included in my list? I would love to hear your ideas.

Blog 4 Reference list

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