



Exploring Theoretical Approaches to Learning and Behaviours in the Classroom.

Introduction

This academic scrapbook aims to provide an insight into some of the historical theoretical approaches to learning and the importance they play in reinforcing classroom practice and behaviours.

This scrapbook will explain a brief overview of the theory itself before relating how the theory is used, and has been used, in classrooms practices for many years.

The information in this scrapbook will be sourced using academic literature, news articles and personal experiences as teaching assistant.



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Behaviourism – What is it?

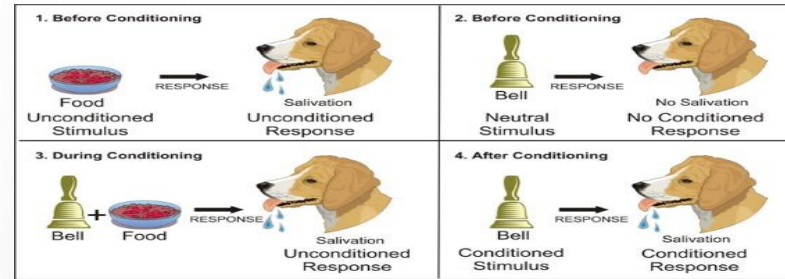
Behaviourism since the early 19th Century has been based on the philosophy that a behaviour can be altered by a Stimulus (reward or reprimand) in order to get someone to respond accordingly.

There have been many theorists over the years that have touched upon or should we say stumbled upon the theory of behaviourism. Each of them interpreting behaviourism slightly differently.

And whilst almost all of their experiments were carried out on animals (except John Watson) in the early 19th Century the theory behind their findings was transferred to behaviourism in humans and whilst some criticism over their theory was challenged the theory of behaviourism is still very much used today and has had a massive impact on education.

The Theory of Classical Conditioning

Psychologist Ivan Pavlov in the early nineteenth century, through his initial research into the digestive secretions of dogs, accidentally stumbled upon a great scientific discovery, a theory known as Classical Conditioning which demonstrated the ability the dogs had to deliver an automatic conditioned response, to a specific stimulus. (Bates,2019)



G- team (ND)

Pavlov was able to associate the theory of classical conditioning with humans and their ability to be taught, or to be "conditioned".

Classical Conditioning In The Classroom

The theorist analogy behind classical conditioning in the classroom, is that a teacher can train her class to perform a certain task or produce a certain behaviour by providing a conditioned trigger (albeit, it has to be taught initially) which could be in the form of a sound, picture, phrase or an action. It may not be obvious that actions carried out in school relate to Pavlov's theory of classical conditioning ... but they do! And in most instances the school day would not run so smoothly without them.

What Does It Look Like?

In school A at the start of a new school year will use classical conditioning to teach their pupils the expected behaviours and routines of their classroom without having to tell them daily what is expected of them.



When a teacher wants attention, over time, she will condition the pupils to follow the 5 steps when she raises her hand.



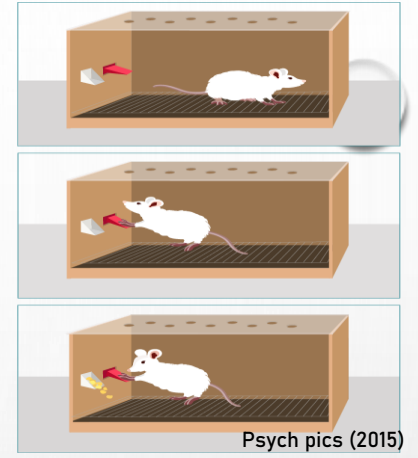
A teacher will teach a child in order to be listened to, they must raise their hand.



In order to signal the end of play a buzzer will sound and the children will freeze.

The Theory of Operant Conditioning

Burrhus Skinner's theory on radical behaviourism or more commonly known as operant conditioning stems from an experiment whereby rats realised that they would receive a reward (food, water) if they stood on a lever. Skinner called this phenomenon Positive reinforcement (Smith, 2015). To further his theory Skinner then experimented with the rats using what he called a negative reinforcer (he used electric shocks when the rats pressed the lever. He concluded that positive reinforcement had a longer lasting effect on the rats than that of the negative reinforcers (the shock) and in fact he even concluded that negative reinforcements had more of a detrimental effect on the subjects (Bates, 2019)



Formid apps (2019)

Operant Conditioning In The Classroom - What Does It Look Like?

Operant conditioning is widely used in a variety of situations including in classrooms today.

School A uses the Dojo reward system. Points are awarded to children for good work, good choices, helping others etc. When a child reaches a certain amount, they have a prize. This gives the child an incentive to work better. Whilst the Dojo programme also has punishment elements school A does not use them as we feel a child should not have points already awarded for positive behaviours taken away for negative ones as this is only going to impact on future behaviours.



Teachers Pay Teachers (ND)

As Skinner said negative reinforcement has more of a detrimental effect. In this instance the child would feel there was no point in earning positive points if they were to make one negative choice all the hard work would be undone. As a school, School A works restoratively so if negative choices are made, we talk through with the child on their choice, so they are able to understand why the choice they made wasn't necessarily the best one to make. It makes more sense than to punish them and they still have not further understanding of the choice they made.

"Canter and Canter (2001) advise not to impose fines or deduct points for misbehaviour"
Porter (2006)



Crocker (2019)

Pinterest (2019)

The Theory of Scaffolding

Eventbrite (2016)

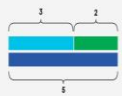
The theory of scaffolding was discovered by Psychologist Jerome Bruner in the 1960's. His theory suggested that if students were given the support, they needed to complete something new then the child would use that knowledge to be able to work independently, actually participated in in their own learning, rather than being spoon fed (Bates 2019).

Scaffolding in the Classroom – What does it look like ?

In School A before the start of every new lesson topic the class teacher will give an introduction on what they are going to learn at a level all pupils will understand. You could say the foundations. The teacher will teach then model a similar problem giving new information (not already taught) they need in order to solve the problem. Praising students even if the answer isn't quite there, because they gave it a go! The teacher will engage with them seeking suggestions from the pupils on how this problem can be solved by using what "they already know" to help them. This is the setting the scaffolding ready for the children to work independendantly. Obviously, further support will be provided if needed. (Firestone , M 2019)



Concrete



Pictorial

$$3+2=5$$

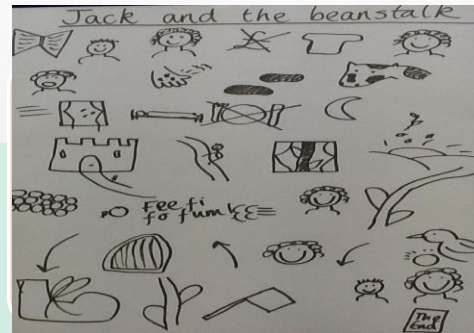
Abstract

When exploring equivalent fractions for example:

1. Starting with multi-link cubes – Concrete information,
2. Progressing on to the equation in pictorial form,
3. Finally being left with abstract of the equation and an understanding of the concept. (Currell 2018)



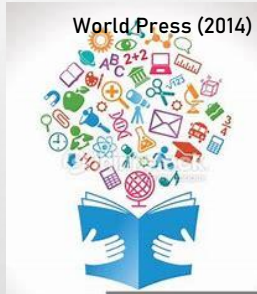
Read Write Inc methods helps children decode words making it easier for them to read and they are able to use their knowledge of phonics to help them with spelling



School A

To help children with their story writing we use Pie COrbits scheme which allows them to memorise the story using actions which allows them to recreate the story by drawing a story map and eventually changing parts of the story i.e. a character or place to be able to create their own story.

"Bruner has always been, and still is, one of the leading figures in Education"
Takaya (2008)



"The most effective way to develop a coding system is to discover it rather than be told by a teacher."
Jerome Bruner
(Currell 2018)

"Jerome Bruner is not merely one of the foremost educational thinkers of the era," commented Howard Gardner in 2001; 'he is also an inspired learner and teacher. His infectious curiosity inspires all who are not completely jaded'.
Teaching times (2019)



*Rewards cheapen the intrinsic motivation to behave.
Linsin (2012)*

"By ignoring cognitive development (Skinner, 1950), behaviourism deprives itself of fully understanding the role of behaviour" Charman et al., (2000).

"Since reflexes are strictly defined as physiological interactions, behaviourism cannot explain individual differences in human learning, variations in learning- styles and the influence of personality on learning "(Rosander, 2013; Kamarulzaman, 2014).

Spence (2009) states:-
"scaffolding prevents students to learn more"
And
"students avoid failure"

Differences In Theories

Some say skinner's theory of operant conditioning stemmed from ideas of fellow psychologists (Pavlov, Watson, Thorndike) albeit something which skinner denies, in fact quite the opposite. Skinner believes that his theory on operant conditioning or radical behaviourism as it was once called is different to that of Pavlov's Classical conditioning. Skinner argued that the subjects in his experiment (the rats) acted on the environment and not to it (i.e. Pavlov's dogs' reaction to the environment) and whilst it appears that most behaviourists theories share the basic assumption on the behavioural approach, it is the mechanics on how behaviour is learned that separates them. (Fredrickson & cline (2009)

Bruner's theory on learning sees the subjects acquiring new information, collating with the information they already know which gives them the ability to use what they already know to solve problems. Bruner's subjects play a very much active role in learning where as the behaviourists seek to suggest that learning can only be achieved by conditioning the subjects behaviour first. Pavlov associating desired behaviours using triggers and Skinner offering rewards tangible or not to get the desired behaviour.



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