

Five theories of psychology and child motivation



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Theories of psychology have been applied in various fields to test out its reliability and relevance to certain situations. Out of all the theories five of them have become well accepted and widely used in motivation and learning. They are namely behavioural, cognitive, developmental, humanistic and personality theories. These theories have gained much support from the psychological society and many other theories have their origins from these five schools of thought. These five theories have been used to aid in children learning by finding the best means of motivation based on their theories. However the fact remains that no two people are the same and one form of motivation may work well for one person but not the other.

Behavioural Theory

Behavioural psychology also known as behaviourism is a theory based upon the idea that all behaviours are acquired through conditioning. Conditioning occurs through interaction with the environment. There are two types of conditioning such as classical conditioning and operant conditioning.

Classical conditioning is a technique used in behavioural training in which a naturally occurring stimulus is paired with a response. Next, a previously neutral stimulus is paired with the naturally occurring stimulus. Eventually, the previously neutral stimulus comes to give the same response without the presence of the naturally occurring stimulus. Teachers are able to apply classical conditioning in the class by creating a positive classroom environment to help students overcome anxiety or fear. Pairing an anxiety-provoking situation, such as performing in front of a group, with pleasant

surroundings helps the student learn new associations. Instead of feeling anxious and tense in these situations, the child will learn to stay calm.

Operant conditioning is a method of learning that occurs through rewards and punishments for behaviours. In operant conditioning a reinforcer is any event that encourages or increases behaviour. There are two kinds of reinforcers they are positive reinforcers and negative reinforcers. Positive reinforcers are favourable events or outcomes that are presented after the behaviour. A response or behaviour is strengthened by the addition of events, such as praise or a direct reward to the child. Negative reinforcers involve the removal of an unfavourable events or outcomes after the display of behaviour such as lessening the amount of homework if the child does well in class.

Punishment is the introduction of an outcome that causes a decrease in behaviour. There are two kinds of punishment namely positive punishment and negative punishment. Positive punishment involves the presentation of an unfavourable event or outcome in order to weaken the behaviour such as caning for not doing homework. Negative punishment occurs when a favourable event or outcome is removed after behaviour occurs such as not allowing the class to go for an early recess.

Cognitive Theory

Cognitive psychology studies mental processes such as how people think, perceive, remember and learn. The core focus of cognitive psychology is on how people acquire, process and store information. There are numerous practical applications for cognitive research, such as ways to improve

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memory, how to increase decision-making accuracy, and how to structure educational curriculum to enhance learning such as the use of mind mapping during lessons. As part of the larger field of cognitive science, this branch of psychology is related to other disciplines including neuroscience, philosophy, and linguistics.

Learning motivation of children can be improved as the options for teaching methods which suits the individual's capacity and ways of generating interest can be looked into thus making it enjoyable to learn such as the use of hand puppets.

Developmental Theory

Developmental theory is the scientific study of human development that seeks to understand and explain how and why people change throughout life from birth to death. This includes all aspects of human growth, including physical, emotional, intellectual, social, perceptual, and personality development.

By better understanding how and why people change and grow, we can then apply this knowledge to helping people achieve to their full potential. An example would be giving lessons, tasks or tests that provide a healthy challenge, taking into account of age, physical and mental status, but still doable gives a sense of accomplishment and maintains interest levels which will turn into learning motivation.

Humanistic Theory

Humanistic psychology focuses on individual's potential and stressed the importance of growth and self-actualization. The core belief of humanistic psychology was that people are naturally good, deviations from this natural tendency causes mental and social problems. It differs from behavioural theory which focuses mainly on the behaviour of the person without taking into account that the person behaviour is a matter of choice.

Learning using this approach is learner orientated with emphasis on positive student teacher relationship and constructing the curriculum based on the student's needs and capability to achieve growth and self-actualization thus making sure the child is happy and have the motivation to learn.

Personality Theory

Personality psychologists use conceptions of personality that can apply to everyone. Personality research has led to the development of a number of theories that help explain how and why certain personality traits develop. A personality is made up of certain patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that make a person unique. Personality arises from within the individual remains fairly consistent throughout life.

By knowing the child's personality, learning and motivation approach can be tailored to suit the child to achieve maximum effect. If a child who is known to be extremely shy will have anxiety to stand in front of the class to present project work will not perform well. Educators can think of other ways to assess the child's capabilities while coaching the child to be a better public speaker without grades on the line. By doing so one can remedy what is lacking from the child and honing the child's natural talents.

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Conclusion

The wide range of human feelings, personalities, thought processes, experience and situation will determine the source of motivation for an individual. Giving every child the same treatment will alienate the ones that are not compatible with the treatment. This gives rise to difficulty in learning which decreases motivation. Using the knowledge gained from the research of the five theories one can tailor the way they educate the child in a way that the child will be motivated to learn and effectively gain the knowledge and skills being taught.