

Introduction to development psychology



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The following essay will Compare and contrast the information processing approach with the behaviourist approach to understanding childrens psychological development. Taking into account the historical development of Psychology. The essay will take into account how the two approaches differ and how the two theories were developed. Piaget's and Miller are theorist of cognitive Development and information processing perspectives, these theorist have had a deep impact on understanding cognitive development. Skinner and Bandura are theorist of behaviour theorist each one has a different approach to how they see things.

Information processing and cognitive development are of the same idea , cognitive psychology looks at each individual as processor of information, Like computers that record the information given and then store it the memory and then goes on to produce the output (Mcleod, 2008). Cognitive psychologist compares the human mind to a computer, stating that we are able to retrieve and store information given to us and then alter it by using ' mental programs' (Mcleod, 2008).

The Information processing theory also contains quantitative and qualitative development with qualitative development happening though a new line of attach for storing information and retrieval or gathering problem- solving rules (Miller, 2011). Expanding and being able to remember more items in the working memory are examples of quantitative changes. Qualitative and quantitative methods of defining information both work together to progress new ways in the processing system (Miller, 2011).

Jean Piaget's (2002) was as being the most influential theorist of child development his studies began by observing his own children when they were infants and how they unravelled problems that Piaget's had put in front of them. Piaget's later went on to study other children by using a clinical method of how children would solve and remember different things ranging from rules, games to the laws of physics. From observation made, Piaget's devised his cognitive developmental theory of intellectual growth. Piaget's sees children as active agents in their own developments, always building their Knowledge and altering their cognitive structure to be able to understand what goes on in the world (Shaffer, 2002). Piaget's cognitive development has continued to be very popular because of its extensiveness and a worthwhile tool for thought and research. Critics may have interpreted his viewpoints to rigidly (Flanagan 1996)

Further research was done by George Miller(1956) on information processing and cognitive psychology. He provided two theoretical ideas of which was ' chunking' which is the capacity for the short term working memory. Miller (1956) stated that the short term memory could only hold Five to Nine chunks of information. The second theoretical idea was information processing by using a human computer model (Miller 1920).

Behaviourism works on the foundations of " stimulus response" which is behaviour caused by external stimuli. Watson (1913) states that you are born with a blank slate " Tabula Rosa" he claims that children have no inborn tendencies; he believes how you turn out depends on your upbringing and how you are treated as a child. Watson went out to demonstrate that fear and other emotions are acquired and not inborn. The demonstration of '
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classical conditioning' that Watson and Rosalie Raynor (1920) did was that of a rat to a nine month old named Albert, the reaction of Albert was positive and he played with the rat as he had done with the dog and rabbit previously. however the next time Little Albert went to play with the rat Watson tried to get the response of fear from ' Little Albert' when he touched the rat, Watson would do this by standing behind him and bang a steel rod with a hammer and to see what reaction he got from Albert as the child started to associate the loud banging whilst playing with the rat, the reaction was that ' Little Albert' did became fearful of the rat and this proved that fear is learned (Shaffer, 2002).

Another example of ' classical condition' is that of a Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov whilst studying the saliva of dog' he discovered a phenomenon that he labelled " psychic reflexes." And the experiment then became called Pavlov's dogs were. The dogs were in a chamber he recognised that if he paired the meat powder with a stimulus like the noise of a ringing bell the dogs would react and that would produce the dog's salivation. Pavlov has shown that stimulus-response. (Learning-theories. com 2012).

Burrhus Fredrick Skinner(1904-90) theory was related to behaviour he was well known and had the most effect in his area of psychology. Operant conditioning differs from classical conditioning for the reason that children learn from their environment. Research was done by using animals and children; he stated that it can be possible to shape both animals and children's behaviour by using reinforcement for example the naughty step or a star chart , Parents still apply reinforcement by praising a child when he or

she has been good or punishing them if they have misbehaved (Slater and Bremner 2003).

Albert Bandura (1925) studied different behaviours in further detail. His behaviourism was less machine-like than Skinner's theory. He did not only concentrate on observing behaviour he also studied what processes went on in the mind. His approach at first was named sociobehaviorism, then social cognitive theory and in the end social learning theory (Slater and Bremner 2003). In the 1960s Bandura conducted a sequence of experiments on children's aggression. How this was achieved was putting a small group of children in front of the TV to observe a film of an adult playing with various different toys one of which was an inflatable "Bobo" doll. The group watched the film and what they saw was the adult aggressively hitting the doll with a hammer. When the children were left alone to play with some toys and their own Bobo doll he observed them being aggressive towards the doll mimicking what they saw on the screen. Bandura (1925) believed that children learnt from what they have observed (Slater and Bremner 2003).

Bandura (1977, 1986, 1992) agrees with Skinner that operant conditioning is a vital form of learning more so for animals. In spite of this Bandura emphasises that humans are cognitive beings- who actively access, store and retrieve information processing (Shaffer 2002)

By comparing and contrasting the two approaches, information processing and behaviourism, there are some differences in the way we learn and understand. Behaviourism, acts on stimulation, whereas cognitive and information processing uses mental processes to formulate ideas.

The view of the learning process for a behaviorist is change in behavior, while a cognitivist views internal mental process including insight, information processing, memory and perception. The focus of learning for behaviorists is the stimuli in external environments, whereas cognitivists have internal cognitive structuring. (Buchanan, K 1997).

Behaviorism and Cognitivism are two theory's in psychology that have an effect on learning and education. Behaviorism is the study of behavior for the purpose of identifying its factors. Behaviorism employs mechanism as a fundamental metaphor, which assumes that behavior is ruled by a set of physical laws. Cognitivism was a reaction to Behaviorism. It is the study of mental processes through the scientific method and abstractions from behavior. Cognitivism employs mechanism and information processing as the principle metaphors for interpreting findings (Atkisson, 2010).

The theorist differs particularly in their views on behavior. The study on behaviorism was done on animals, which views behavior as a complex consequence of environmental stimuli, whereas Cognitivism, whose research subjects are often humans, sees behavior as a point from which to abstract the mental processes behind the behavior. (Atkisson, 2010).

Cognitivism and Behaviorism are similar in significant ways. They both use mechanism as a fundamental assumption. Cognitivism goes further than behaviorism in that it extends the mechanical assumptions to the mind, not just behavior. But nonetheless both theory's view human action, mental or otherwise, as determined by physical laws. (Atkisson, 2010).

In conclusion this essay has compared and contrasted the information processing approach with the behaviourist approach to understanding children's psychological development. It has taken into account the historical development of Psychology. It has explored the theories of Piaget, Miller, Watson, Skinner, and Bandura and related the quantitative and qualitative. It is pertinent to say that although both theorist have their place the behaviourist dates back to 1913 when Watson stated that you are born with a blank slate " Tabula Rosa" Since this time cognitive research has developed and shows that as well as behaviourist views remains. There is proof that even in behaviour cognitive and information processing is needed to make informed decisions about right and wrong.