

Social learning
perspective and its
implications
education essay



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A critical exploration of Banduras social learning perspective and its implications for learning in mainstream classroom for the individuals who show challenging behaviour.

1. 0 Introduction

Achieving effective teaching and learning in mainstream settings of pupils with challenging behaviour remains a concern of professionals, researchers and educators. The question; whether there should be a distinctive pedagogy for targeting learners with challenging behaviour and or special educational needs which had become a burning issue with the release of The Green Paper on special educational needs (SEN) (DfEE, 1997) as well as the Literacy Strategy and pupils with SEN guidelines (DfEE, 1998) are indicative of the concern that meeting the learning needs of all learners in current educational settings poses for teaching and professional practice since inclusion had began to define the landscape of mainstream classroom (Norwich & Lewis, 2001). This evidently reflects the changing political mood which aspire a more inclusive society. However, there is concern about the attainability of the principle that all children and young people are valued as individuals, as reflected in the Government's document Removing Barrier to Achievement (DfES, 2004), through a common pedagogy in mainstream fashion. Thus the importance of teaching-learning approaches comes to the fore in determining effective inclusive practices especially for targeting pupils with challenging behaviour in mainstream classroom.

An accessible strategy and approach to achieve this has to meet the learning needs, and thus define the learner appropriateness of such approach

required for the learners who show challenging behaviour in mainstream classroom. Bandura (1977) developed a perspective that approaches learning as not just a product of classical and operant conditioning but as being influenced by observational learning. According to Bandura (1986) observational learning takes place when the learner learns from observing the actions of a model and the consequences of those actions leading to inhibition or disinhibition of his own action. What this implies for classroom practice is that the learner's challenge has to be located functionally, appreciated and addressed within a framework that contextually interface effectively, appropriate interactions between context, object and subject in a learning process.

In critically evaluating Bandura's social learning perspective and its implication for learning in mainstream classroom for the individuals with challenging behaviour, this essay aims at exploring the value of the social learning perspective as an approach that can inform effective inclusive practice in targeting learner-specific needs in mainstream context. The need to target individual learner needs, and at once achieve inclusive mainstream targets and objectives obviates the task that has to be undertaken for the group of learners with certain conditions and impairments that do place barriers to learning, requiring accommodation to be made to achieve same level of learning as the normal learner in order to ensure that effective learning takes place across board. It is therefore significant that this essay suggests that within the trajectory of theories applicable to effective learning, and within the context of mainstream classroom, Bandura's social learning perspective can be an essential component of any multi-modular

intervention in targeting the learning needs of the individuals with challenging behaviour. Thus, more than ever before, teaching and the rationale that supports the actions that teachers take encompass a wide range of variables which fundamentally involves learning. How is learning best identified, motivated, achieved, assessed and built upon for the learner, are all questions that proceed with, and justify the many and varying decisions that constitute teaching, perhaps much more so, how it can best be approached in the mainstream classroom for the learner with challenging behaviour.

1. 1 Bandura's Social Learning Perspective an overview

Albert Bandura is a leading psychologist who had contributed immensely towards the development of many fields of psychology, and made an outstanding work with his social learning theory. His social learning theory is underpinned by his findings in researching the determinants and mechanisms of observational learning through analyzing the fundamental aspects of human learning and the propensity of the learner to model their own behaviour on the behaviour of the 'observed other.'

According to Ormond (1999), Social learning as a theory concerns with learning that occurs within a social context. The foundational understanding of the theory is based on the consideration that human beings learn from one another through observational learning, imitation and modelling. Below is Ormond's further assumptions as regards to social learning theory :

Learning can occur through people observing the behaviour of others and the outcome of such behaviours

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Learning can occur without a change in behaviour. What this suggests is that even though the Behaviourists had maintained that learning results in a permanent change in behaviour, the social learning perspective's claim that learning can occur through observation alone means that learning may not necessarily be signified either in performance or represented by a change in behaviour.

Cognition is a basic key in learning. Social learning theory is grounded on the interpretation of human learning from the cognitive index. It suggests a link between behaviourist learning theories and cognitive theories.

Bandura's social learning perspective also suggests the assumption that modelling is reinforced by the environment, for instance where the model behaviour leads to consequences that reinforce it. It is evident that the behaviours that people learn from others are sometimes resulting in satisfying or reinforcing experiences. Bandura's Bobo doll experiment was used to illustrate how vicariously the behaviour we learn from others can be reinforced whereby the model being copied reinforces for a response. The Bobo doll experiment shows a model child hitting an inflated doll - the Bobo doll. A group of pupils were shown the model being praised for hitting the doll. The effect was that without being reinforced themselves, the pupils began to also hit the Bobo doll.

However, in contemporary times, emphasis on the social learning perspective have tended to dwell on reinforcement and punishment, angling more towards cognitive interventions on learning and behavioural change.

Contemporary approaches to social learning perspective suggest that;

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Reinforcement and punishment, even though are not the main cause of learning, do have an indirect effects on learning.

Both reinforcement and punishment impact on the level and extent of which the behaviour learnt is exhibited by the learner.

And that the learner's anticipation of a form of reinforcement cognitively impacts on the processes of learning.

2. 0 Social Learning and Cognitive processes

Bandura's social learning perspective implies a number of cognitive factors; whereby it proposes a distinction to be made between learning by observation and learning through imitation of what has been learned.

Learning by observation involves cognitive processing during the course of observation and paying attention, (task is cognitive), is critical to observational learning. Likewise, cognitively Bandura's thesis outlines the processes of learning. Bandura considers factors of expectations, reciprocal causation and modelling in the connections that is being made between subject, object and context in the learning process.

2. 1 Behaviours and modelling

Instrumentally, the social learning perspective shows how we can understand behaviour as a process of learning through modelling, at least in part. The social learning perspective sees behaviour as being influenced by modelling. In the classroom for example, pupils can learn through mathematical demonstrations. The Bobo doll points to the example that aggression for instance can be learned through models. Also, research had

shown that children who are exposed to aggressive models, for instance parents who are aggressive or violent, become more aggressive themselves. Then again, moral thinking and behaviours that are modelled from a sense of right or wrong are heavily influenced and developed through modelling.

3.0 The learner with Challenging Behaviour and mainstream context

Challenging behaviour had been described as that behaviour which prevents the participation of the learner in appropriate activities and isolates the learner from peers. It is seen as the behaviour that affects the learning and functioning of other people and that drastically reduces the learner's opportunities for full involvement in usual learning activities. The learners with challenging behaviour are always making excessive demands on both staff resources and other learning support resources (Harris et. al., 1993). According to McBrien & Felce (1992), challenging behaviour can also be seen as behaviour which constitutes a challenge to other people given that it is difficult to find effective way of responding to them. Challenging behaviour shown by the learner does not mean he or she is in himself or herself the problematic, rather, it is the complex dynamics of interaction between the learner, the learner's behaviour and the learner's social environment. Bandura in his work stated that "...of the many cues that influence behaviour, at any point in time, none is more common than the actions of others" (Bandura 1996). The implication of Bandura's thesis for mainstreaming learners with challenging behaviour in the context of mainstream classroom is that the learner requires a scaffold of peer

modelling and contextual designs that blend the learning environment with the desired influences.

In considering the importance of teaching-learning approaches in his review, Wedell (2005) reported that recently, government -funded research aimed at finding out if there are fundamental difference in special needs and educational approaches in general, in the main concluded, in line with the opinion of Davis & Florian (2004), that the important thing is to achieve a pedagogy that is inclusive of all learners. However, effective classroom teaching and learning is not only dependent on the teacher; his skills, delivery techniques and environment, but equally, on knowledge of the learner's background and sound appreciation of this background knowledge by the teacher via resourceful channels. This will enable the teacher weigh what appropriate approaches can be well adopted to target the learning needs of the variegated nature of the learners in mainstream setting including those who show challenging behaviour. Inclusion which has become the mainstream approach to teaching and learning is a noteworthy ideal. Yet, the difficulty is with the dilemma it presents as regards practically meeting the learning needs of those cohort of learners who present challenging behaviour and at the same time meet set target and realize common objectives within a portfolio of inclusive mainstream strategies and practices that will not undermine the learning and functioning of other learners in mainstream classroom. It is acknowledged, () that despite policy statements and sporadic innovative interventions in inclusive practices, mainstream classrooms are still struggling to catch up with meeting the

demands of the learners with behaviour challenges and targeting their needs through effective learning approaches.

Lewis and Norwich (1999) had in their work raised the question of diversity of learning needs in mainstream context. The argument is that learning approach(es) that will match the diversity of learning needs in mainstream settings with curricular expectations across board are required. Thus, Lewis and Norwich (1999) attempted a conceptualization of diversity of learning needs as applicable to mainstream settings and typified three areas of needs as;

learner unique needs or individual needs

exceptional needs or needs common only to some group of learners, and

common needs or needs that cut across all learners.

A pedagogy that responds generically to this wide range of learning needs is advocated for targeting and accommodating special needs learners including those with challenging behaviour in mainstream classroom context (Lewis & Norwich, 1999).

4. 0 Learning: context and concept – Bandura’s Social learning Perspective

4. 1 What is learning?

There is no simple answer to the question; what is learning? Brackenbury (2008) noted that learning could be result of;

Maturation (nature, heredity)

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Experience (nurture, environment)

Cognitive processes (thought, intelligence, language)

Socio-emotional processes

Interaction between biological, cognitive, social factors, etc.

Gredler (2001) sees learning as the process of acquisition of new skills, knowledge, attitudes and values with an outcome which manifests in the new capabilities possessed by the learner. Good and Brophy (1990) describes learning in terms of the permanent change in capacity for performance which is acquirable through experience. Learning has also been approached from a range of theoretical perspectives that tend to model strategies which enable an understanding of the goals and expectations for individuals as well as groups involved in the learning process.

4. 2 Some Theoretical Perspectives of Learning

The following are examples of theoretical perspectives outlined by Davis & Florian, (2004).

Behavioural models; focuses on what can be observed as learning outcomes based on the principles of reinforcement theory in different learning contexts. It considers all behaviour as being learned in accordance with the rules which determines it. Bandura's social learning perspective agrees with this model.

Constructivists models; the learner is seen as active participant in the knowledge seeking process by making his or her experience responsive and

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relevant and getting intrinsic satisfaction through learning and solving problems.

Social constructivism; learners active role in learning is placed within the context of his or her social groups or community for instance, peer forum, classroom, school, wherein knowledge is mutually created through purposeful interactions and valued activities.

It has to be well appreciated that a good understanding of the workings of any one or a combination of these models is crucial in the teaching and learning process and perhaps more so, in effectively applying them to the context of the learners with special needs like those showing challenging behaviours. As observed in Wedell (2005), the key element considering appropriateness of teaching and learning approaches is the recognition of the place of the learner as an active rather than a passive participant.

Therefore, for any teaching theory to relate and respond to the learner as an active participant in the teaching and learning process, it has to take into cognizance the question of what determines learning, for who, at what stage, and in what circumstances in order not to circumvent the shared and unique learning needs of the learner, especially within the broad settings of inclusive mainstream classroom.

4. 3 Examining the social learning perspective

In an article written by Frank Pajares (1997), the social learning perspective draws emphasis on the influence of expectancies and self-efficacy on behaviour and behavioural change. It considers modelling or observational learning as parallel to reinforcement. New behaviours, especially behaviours

in form of aggression, violence as seen modelled by parents and in the media, which have had influence on the way children act, are being explained with this perspective. Equally, as a perspective to learning, the social learning concept is critical of behaviourist, psychoanalytic and trait theories of behaviour. The social learning concept does not consider reinforcement as necessary in learning given that it suggests people can learn through just observation. In line with the concept, behaviour can be modelled through expectancies and then maintained or terminated by its consequences. The perspective explains behavioural problems as being resulting from low levels of “ self-efficacy.”

Self-efficacy

In line with the social learning perspective, self-efficacy can be seen as self-confidence towards learning. The notion is that people usually would engage in behaviours they are more certain of their capability of executing successfully. What this implies for learning is that the higher the level of self-efficacy, the more confident the learner is towards learning. Theoretically frame worked, self-efficacy therefore supports the learning process given that learners with high self efficacy would tend to achieve more being confident performers. Many factors are considered to affect the learner’s self-efficacy. Such factors as personal successes and failures, the successes and failures of others and signals or messages received from others like peers are seen as likely to affect self-efficacy. Frank Pajares (1997)

Alongside self-efficacy is the notion of self-regulation, self-instruction, self-monitoring and self-reinforcement. Self-regulation which in social learning

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concept happen when the individual in consideration of his own ideas about the appropriateness or otherwise of certain behaviours chooses actions to suit his purpose. The several aspects of self-regulation include; self-standards and goals, self observations, self judgement and self reaction. Self-regulation is considered as being an important technique to learning given that it can be instrumental to self-reward where and when needed behaviour is achieved. On the other hand, self-instruction is considered helpful in learning whereby the learner takes self-instructions that guide his or her behaviour towards achieving a goal.

Self-monitoring and self-reinforcement

According to the social learning perspective, the concepts of self-monitoring and self-reinforcement are critical to learning as they are the two ways the learner can control his or her own behaviour. First the learner can monitor and observe his or her behaviour using markers to highlight the high and low marks in behaviour. Then again, the learner can influence his or her behaviour by reinforcing himself or herself or by withholding such reinforcement. However, the social learning theory has been criticised for giving little significance to development, motivation and conflict. Ormond (1999)

4. 4 Assessment and Formulation of Social Learning

The assessment of social learning is done through involving the learners and asking them to make statement about their perceived level of self-efficacy and expectations and associated behaviours. The learners' statements of self-efficacy are thus considered as predictive of their levels of performance.

For assessment, comparisons are then made of the efficacy expectations that are obtained before and after intervention in order to detect whether there has been increases or decreases in learners' self-efficacy.

The social learning perspective considers the learners' behaviour challenges as resultant from factors such as; exposure to models displaying negative behaviour, negative expectancies and negative self-conceptions, lowering levels of self-efficacy or inefficacy, and negative self-evaluations. Anxiety in this context is explained as resulting from perceived inefficacy, expectations of not being able to cope with threatening situations or people. Thus, with increase in self-efficacy come confidence and less anxiety and ability to cope with threats from situations and people.

Usually, experience of low levels of self-efficacy may be observed with learners showing behaviour challenges. In practical terms, what this means for classroom learning context is that their feelings of inability to perform results in eroded self-confidence, and falling below desired behaviour. This frustrating self-doubt leads such learners to conclude that they may be lacking in the necessary resources or skills required to achieve desirable performance. It is therefore the aim of social learning interventions to bring to the learning context an increase in the learners' self-efficacy; confidence and ability to target and meet the desired goals. And it is through interventions modelling, self-instructional statements, self-reinforcement, etc that self-efficacy can be changed.

5. 0 Social learning perspective and Classroom Interventions

Increasingly, researches have informed the opinion that successful classroom performance may depend, in part, on effective learning approaches, and that a learning difficulty is not just a fixed characteristic of the learner, but partly determined by the learning context (Frederickson and Cline, 2006). The social learning intervention aims at integrating subject, object and context to achieve increase in the learners'; both developments in the cognitive and behavioural competencies. Its two main tools of interventions are applying modelling and changing perceived self-efficacy of the learner.

5. 1 Modelling

Modelling is applied to enable the learner inhibit or disinhibit performance and to facilitate performance as desired in term of appropriate or inappropriate. Through observation of appropriate models, learners can be cued to learn to desired skills and behaviours. By adopting models that can convey the right messages of success and demonstrate a sequence of appropriate actions. Learners can learn both through cognitive modelling and or by direct instructions. However, the teacher will be required to verbalise their problem-solving procedures for the learner to learn by cognitive modelling. As an intervention strategy, modelling is characterized by the following cues:

Progressive stages (it is structured step by step)

Feedbacks (feedbacks are essentially incorporated)

Clarity (it has to be shown clearly and be easily understood)

Consistency (the learner rehearses his behaviour until satisfactory levels of competence are reached)

The teacher stands significantly as a model for the learner. The teacher can induce consistency by demonstrating the desirable model behaviour to the learners to enable the learners imitate the required behaviour until a satisfactory level of competence is achieved. Feedback comments from the teacher are also necessary to accomplish the learning process of modelling as much as reinforcements of the efforts the learner is making, and encouraging the learner to use positive self-statements in order to achieve a high motivation for the learning task. Peer modelling is equally important as a key tool and effective way of behavioural modelling in learning. When learners observe their peers mastering problems they tend to model them if they are symbolically represented as successful. This goes to say therefore that models that can effectively be an influence on peers should have the characteristics of being presented as realistic, conveying trust, be convincing and earn sufficient reputation amongst other peers.

5. 1. 1 Conditions required for Modelling

Bandura (1977) recognized that certain conditions are prerequisite for effective modelling. These conditions are considered necessary because they have to be present before a learner can successfully model the behaviour of another – the model. These four conditions as outlined by Bandura include (Ormond 1999):

Attention: attention to the model is required from the learner. This presuppose, perhaps that the model has to hold some considerable interest

for the learner. Attention plays a critical role in learning and is often influenced by the expectation of reinforcement.

Retention: the learner has to be able to make clear observation and be able to recall and remember the behaviour which has been modelled. Using rehearsal as a technique of increasing ability of retention of observations can be encouraged.

Motor reproduction: thirdly is the ability of the learner to possibly replicate the modelled behaviour. However, the learner's developmental level has to be matched with the complex nature of any task for effective modelling to occur.

Motivation: it is necessary that the learner has to be sufficiently motivated for effective modelling to occur. There has to be sufficient grounds for the learner to apply his learned task. Learners have to have application for demonstrating what they have learnt. Even though these are predisposing factors or conditions for effective modelling, it has to be noted that these conditions varies among individual learners and therefore predicate same behaviour albeit with variations in producing such desired behaviour.

5. 1. 2 The impact of Modelling on behaviour

Modelling can impacts behaviour in many ways. Through modelling, new behaviours are learnt and previously learned behaviours are reinforced and increased in frequency of occurrence. Modelling can also be used as a learning tool to discourage or encourage previously prohibited behaviours, as well that task are not set or required that are beyond the learner's ability, and or developmental capacity to cope. Encouraging self-regulation
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techniques that can provide an effective method for improving the learner's behaviour is necessary to achieve a good level of confidence in maintaining the desired behavioural target. The expectation of reinforcement influences cognitive processes that promote learning. As a result of being reinforced, people form expectations about the consequences that future behaviours are likely to bring. The learner needs to be aware of the appropriate response and reinforcement that can bring about confidence and increase self-efficacy. The teacher can thus encourage the promotion of such self-efficacy by building a channel for the learners to receive confidence lifting messages and props through observing others successes and being active in experiencing success on their own progress.

6. 0 Evaluation in social learning perspective

Evaluation from this perspective primarily involves identifying and recording changes in perceived self-efficacy following intervention, i. e. from lower to higher levels of efficacy, sufficient to bring about significant behavioural change. The effectiveness of observational learning and modelling can also be evaluated. Changes in self-efficacy should be significant enough for learners to feel that they have achieved a sense of personal control and competence. As a result they should now be able to acquire and utilise coping skills with respect to problem behaviour.

7. 0 Educational implications of Social Learning Perspective

In classroom settings, the social learning approach can impact on learning in many ways. A summary of the implications of the social learning perspective for the learner are given below;

Learners often learn through observing other people

Clear distinction between behaviours and their consequences can effectively result to increase in desired behaviour from the learner and decreases in the undesirable behaviour. In the classroom, involving the learners in discussion on the rewards for and consequences of desired and the undesirable behaviours can be used to facilitate the learning process.

Through modelling can be an effective alternative to shaping by providing a quicker and more easily responsive means for teaching new behaviour.

However, to achieve effective learning through modelling, the four essential conditions must exist; attention, retention, motor reproduction, and motivation.

8. 0 Conclusion

Bandura's social learning perspective has application for learning in mainstream classroom for the individuals with challenging behaviour.

Although a variant of the traditional behaviourist view on learning and development, it furthered the applicability of the principles of conditioning and reinforcement elaborated earlier by Skinner, bringing a more contextual approach to learning by observation and imitation. Bandura's social learning perspective presents a thesis that demonstrates that modelling is the basis of the development of a wide spectrum of behaviour in children.

What implications this thesis has for learning is that the learner can learn skills and behaviour simply by watching and listening to others around them.

Then again, that through the agency of modelling the learner can learn to learn or unlearn new and old behaviours respectively. Therefore, in <https://assignbuster.com/social-learning-perspective-and-its-implications-education-essay/>

considering the learning interventions appropriate for the learners in inclusive mainstream classroom, modelling can be an appropriate approach to a learning process designed to target their learning needs. Bandura's social learning perspective perhaps, might be an indispensable component of interventions in targeting the learning needs of this group of learners if inclusive principles are to be achieved and all learners equally supported in this context.