

# The history of challenging behaviour terminology education essay

[Education](#)



## **Introduction**

" Building on students` strengths rather than focusing on their problems and deficits has become an important theme in special education, social services, mental health and juvenile corrections" - (Brendtro, Long, & Brown, 2000)The purpose of this assignment is to recognize the role of " Challenging Behaviour", how it affects people when dealing with their behaviour and how we help them cope with it by putting the theory into practice. The assessment of this assignment was structured on twenty-five hours of observation on a thirteen-year-old student at school, community and home. This assignment is sectioned into three parts. In the first part describes what is challenging behaviour and how it affects the person. The second part describes the student and his interactions with the environment around him. In the third part, this assignment describes a reflection of what the observer saw during the twenty-five hours of observation that lead to a support plan which will be built on the student`s strengths rather than focusing on his needs. This will help the student develop resiliency and being able to emerge as a highly functioning adult.

### **1) Challenging Behaviour Terminology**

The terminology " challenging behaviour" has been used to refer to the " stubborn" or " problematic" behaviours which may be exhibited by individuals with a learning disability. There is no exact word to describe challenging behaviour. Challenging behaviour manifests itself into different types, varying from low to high intensity." Culturally abnormal behaviour of such an intensity, frequency or duration that the physical safety of the

person or others is likely to be placed in serious jeopardy, or behaviour which is likely to seriously limit use of, or result in the person being denied access to, ordinary community facilities" (Emerson, 1995).

## ) Impact

In every behaviour classified as "challenging", there are three characteristics in common, which: impede the individual from learning, developing and succeeding; is harmful to the person himself and to others; puts the individual at high risk for later social problems and school failure. Individuals that fall under the category of "Challenging Behaviour" often find themselves rejected, disliked and often ridiculed by the society. This group of people experience lesion in their self-esteem / self-confidence, consenting them to be secluded, depressed, and deprived from opportunities to develop, progress and practice social skills that they extremely need. Sometimes educators / society exacerbate the problem. Both Dr. Ferrante in her lectures frequently stated some educators as "the royal WE", and also the book "Exceptional Lives" 4th edition on pg 133 stated that too often teachers focus on students' deficits rather than their strengths. A concrete example is when individuals with challenging behaviour are subject to zero tolerance policies such as suspending students from schools, treating them like they do not exist or when we throw them out of class. This all happens when first; the behaviour is seen before the individual, and second; the individual is not seen as a whole person. "Students who experience failure in one area, also tend to experience failure in the other"- (Jolivette, 2000).

Challenging behaviour is caused by several factors interacting with each other such as environmental stressors, stressful living conditions, child abuse

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and school factors. " It is therefore important to intervene as early as possible" (Slaby, Roedell, Arezzo, and Hendrix, 1995)

## **1. 2) Dealing with Challenging Behaviour**

To understand better when dealing, with challenging behaviour we have to self-question: why does it happen ? what purpose do they (people with C. B) serve ? how can we take the problem away from the person ? What actions do we take to prevent the problem from occurring again?

## **1. 3) Functions of Behaviour**

" The function of a behaviour refer to the source of environmental reinforcement for it" - (Tarbox et al; 2009). There are four common functions in behavior which are: Attention: desire for attention from peers / adults  
Escape: escape from person, task, environment  
Sensory: the behaviour feels good or meets a sensory need  
Tangible: desire for a specific item or activity

## **1. 4) Determining the Functioning of Behaviour**

To address the challenging behaviour one need to determine its functioning. Determining the functions of behaviour, one needs to: Interview (ecological event) what type of relationship there is between the person and his environment  
Direct observation ( the four functions of behaviour)  
Functional Analysis (eg: S. T. A. R Model / ABC- Accident Behaviour Consequences)  
Functional Hypothesis (the information that emerges from data / analysis )

## 2) Student Profile

Matthew is a fourteen year old teenager. He is tall, robust and energetic. He has brown eyes and short brown hair. Matthew likes hands on activities and in fact his hobbies are building carnival troupes and cribs, cooking, playing video games and playing football. His future ambition is to work in the family business and to start one of his own. One of his wishes is to finish the secondary school as soon as possible to realize his dream.

### 2. 1) Student`s Background

Matthew is the eldest sibling. He has a younger brother (Christopher), two years younger than him. Christopher attends the same secondary school as Matthew and every day he spends most of the time at his grandparents` house (a few meters away from his home). Matthew`s parents have minimum educational knowledge. Matthew`s father (Joseph) runs an agricultural family business and spends most of the day working in the fields. Matthew`s mother takes care of the house and when needed she also gives her husband a hand.

### 2. 2) Medical History

At the age of three Matthew was diagnosed with leukemia. This condition impaired Matthew from learning due to the fact that he never went to kinder and year one. Matthew started attending school regularly from year two.

### 2. 3) Educational placements

" Childhood leukemia survivors may develop non verbal learning disabilities that affect their writing and concentration skill" - (Bessell, 2001a)Primary schools - When attending the local government school, Matthew (Year 2)

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found it very difficult to learn. The following year his mother applied for Matthew to be supported by a learning support assistant (Lsa). According to the Statementing Moderating Panel report Matthew was diagnosed with learning difficulties along with difficulties with his attention span, distractibility and impulsivity. (These together with emotional difficulties are further contributing to Matthew`s difficulties in achieving progress at school). The SMP board recommended shared support but soon turned it into one to one support. Matthew started to benefit from the Lsa support from Year 3. Matthew repeated year 3 because his academic performance was considerably below average. At school Matthew started being bullied (Year 3 -Year 5). Matthew was unwilling to go to school and often bursting into tantrums. His mother had to change his school because she didn`t find any cooperation from the school staff at that time. Matthew attended his final year of primary school at another government school in another locality. Secondary School - Matthew`s psychological report that was done in 2008 stated that he was at risk of attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD). Matthew has been attending this secondary school for the last three years, since transition. At school he is being supported by an Inter-Disciplinary Team.

## **2. 4) The Inter-Disciplinary Team**

Inco (Mr Stephen Spiteri)Head Master (Can. Noel Saliba)School Psychologist / Councilor (Antonella Mizzi)Lsa (Ms. Leanne Azzopardi)Student`s mother (Josette )Student (Matthew)Through this team, at school, Mathew`s academic performance is monitored. The Lsa in collaboration with the subject teachers adapts the work for Matthew and communicates with

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Matthew`s mother. The school psychologist is assessing Matthew every two months to help him express his feelings. The headmaster is the team spokesperson / mediator. When the team members encounter difficulties such as something that is hindering, different opinions / strategies; the head master organizes the meeting. Student`s mother helps the team by giving and suggesting useful information to the team because she knows most about Matthew. Mathew`s collaboration with the team is giving his perspective view. The Inco represents the team outside the school premises. The aim of the team is to see Matthew as independent as possible.

## **2. 5) Level of Support**

Matthew is supported by a full time Lsa (one to one support). He follows the curriculum with differentiated learning and sometimes requires pullouts during lessons such as PSD and Music.

## **2. 6) Student`s Learning Style**

Through all academic subjects Matthew is supported with more than one example (Memory) to understand the concept especially in the core subjects such as Maths and English. Each topic is also modeled (repetition) through step by step instructions to help him understand what he has to do. Matthew is prompted several times during the lessons because he easily gets distracted.

## **2. 7) Types of support**

Adapted handouts, visuals, mind maps, color coding and ICT (Clicker 5 used in English lessons; interactive boards, computers for writing notes) are used

all the time and across all subjects. During assessments (examination) Matthew is provided with a reader, a prompter and extra time is allowed.

## **2. 8) Student`s Level of Functioning**

### **Cognitive skills**

Auditory Processing - Matthew has no problem with hearing. He hears fine. The difficulty is in how the brain interprets a concept (understanding the concept). Visual processing - Matthew does not have any problem with sight. Matthew finds it difficult to form and manipulate accurate images in his mind (schemas). Memory Skills - This is the area which mostly impairs Matthew`s learning. Matthew is limited to new information (short term memory). He picks up only bits and pieces of what is being said during a lesson resulting in making sense of only a little. Processing speed - This area relies on the Memory skills and there is a shift depending on the task. As stated previously, Matthew has fine motor skills and if for example he had to build a crib, he performs well (and even more quickly than his peers). If he had to read / write a short paragraph, he finds it very difficult because of limitations in more than one of the basic psychological factors. Logic and Reasoning - Matthew can perform well when categorizing and grouping objects. Due to the fact that Matthew`s memory limits the information, the brain ends up in processing incorrect information.

### **Communication**

Speech - Matthew does not find difficulty in speaking. He has fine articulation, voice quality and fluency as well as non verbal behaviours such as facial expressions, gestures and head and body movement. Language -

When giving / receiving information in his first language (Maltese) Matthew does well. When he communicates in English, Matthew finds it difficult to communicate because of insufficient vocabulary. He also uses gestures to express himself when speaking in English.

## **Self-help skills**

Matthew is independent in his self-help skills. He has fine eye-hand coordination and finds no difficulty in taking care of himself.

## **Socialization**

Matthew doesn't find any difficulty in socializing. He is a friendly person. At school, during recess, he usually likes to tease others and to be rude.

Matthew does not have many friends at school. After school he spent most of the time with his two friends.

## **3) Reflection's Analysis Report**

Note : The reflection is based on what the observer(me) saw during the 25 hours observation at school, community and home.

### **3. 1) Environmental factors**

#### **School Factors**

Through the eight hours observation at school, Matthew's behaviour was triggered by these factors: Learning (embarrassment and boredom) Rejection Labelled Fighting Nobody has the power to control the environment and neither Matthew has power to control his peers, Lsa's and teacher. Learning (Embarrassment) – Due to his past illness, cognitively, Matthew is limited in learning. Matthew feels embarrassed when he finds

concepts hard to learn. Sometimes educators trigger the student`s behaviour because the more they try to do their work, the more they creates problems (see school observation 1 & 8). Then a time bomb ignites with a chain reaction when Matthew`s temperament starts escalating, the Lsa starts to panic because she feels disappointed that her teaching was not reached, Matthew gets worried about his self-image and starts focusing on his peers rather on his Lsa until he explodes with the first thing he encounters. Learning (Annoyment) -This also depends on how the teacher uses his resources to make the lesson interesting. There is no one size fits all for differentiated learning. As stated earlier, Matthew is at risk of ADHD and if the lesson is not interesting, than the boredom triggers his attention (see school observation 6). A clear example of positive behaviour is when lessons stimulate Matthew. His behaviour defined as " challenging" is diminished (see school observation 3, 4, 5, 7 & 13 ). These two factors have one thing in common. For these behaviours Matthew applies the " Escape" function. For him escape makes him be in a positive state. Not all behaviours occur so the person can " obtain" something; many behaviours occur because the person wants to get away from something or avoid something altogether (Miltenberger, 2008)Rejection - " While it might seem strange that a person would engage in a behaviour to deliberately have someone scold them it can occur because for some people it`s better to obtain " bad" attention than no attention at all" (Cooper, Heron & Heward, 2007). Matthew is disliked by most of his peers and he uses inappropriate behaviour to attract attention. Attention is attracted in two ways; either by swearing (to impress or showing that he is tough) as shown in all S. T. A. R Model (action column) or by acting

out (observation 6 & seven). Labelling - At school Matthew is labelled. As stated previously sometimes teachers are the problem and see only the negative aspect of the person. ( See observation 11). Negative labels can all too easily become self-fulfilling prophecies. They prevent you from seeing the child's positive qualities. They also cause you to lower your expectations of the individual. When you can see a child in a positive light, it helps him to see himself that way, and to act more positively. Fighting - " Instead they learn to expect rejection and may even discover that the best defense is a strong offense and strike out preemptively to protect themselves" - (Moffitt, 1997)At school everybody knows what is Matthew`s weakness and unfortunately there are students that prefer to get hit and see Matthew in trouble (see school observation breaks). In the past he was being bullied, and this still affects him. He uses this behaviour to show that he does not allow anyone to ever mess with him.

### **3. 2) Community & Home factors**

From the observations done in the community and at home, there is a notable shift in Matthew`s behaviour between that exhibited at school and that exhibited in the community and at home. In the community Matthew does not seek much attention and he is a different person from school (see community observation 1 & 3 ). The behaviour; shifts, because Matthew is not restricted by rules and there is nothing that embarrasses him such as learning. When Matthew feels restricted, his behaviour is triggered. At home sometimes he feels also restricted either because he wants privacy or when no swearing is allowed (home observation 1).

### 3. 3) Level of Self-Determination

" Self-determination refers to " acting" as the primary casual agent in one`s life and making choices and decisions regarding one`s quality of life free from undo external influence or interference" - (Wehmeyer, 1996, p. 24)To be self-determined, one has to be motivated. When there aren`t hands on activities, such as home economics lesson or building a crib, Matthew loses interest. To be motivated one has to be self-confident. Being disliked and rejected, Matthew has low self-esteem and that is why he uses the " escape" function because he never trusts himself. A strategy for motivation is the implementation of choices. During the observations done, the choices were rare and in fact, throughout the 25 hours of observation, there was only one choice given (see school observation 2). Choices help people get motivated. The need for autonomy is conceptualized in terms of experiencing a sense of choice, endorsement, and volition with respect to initiating, maintaining, and terminating behavioural engagement. If students are able to think about their choices and the consequences before they act, and choose a safe, acceptable behaviour, then the optimal outcome of the corrective process will have been achieved." To be autonomously motivated involves feeling a sense of choice and volition as a person fully endorses his or her own actions or decisions" (Ryan 1995). In a nutshell, learning is a priority for Matthew because it is affecting his behaviour and also his self-determination. A behaviour support plan will be created to help Matthew identify, control and resolve inappropriate behaviour; by being presented differentiated teaching to motivate him. Motivation helps him be self-determined and self determination increases his quality of life.

### **3. 4) Behaviour Support plan**

#### **Baseline**

When encountering learning that is difficult to understand, lessons that do not stimulate him and relationships that are hard to handle, he expresses his feelings in challenging behaviour using the "escape function". This function leads him to lose control of his behaviour by deteriorating his relationship with his peers and teachers, restricting Matthew from learning and affecting his self-esteem.

#### **Long Term Goal**

Matthew will be able to learn by controlling his behaviour (anger, frustration, embarrassment and boredom).

#### **Short-term Goals**

##### **Lsa & Teachers**

Lsa & teachers will role model mature problem-solving, not resorting to the same inappropriate behaviour (e. g: keeping calm, [ Lsa communicates / talks in a low voice that only Matthew can understand and is heard by rest of the class] to prevent Matthew from being embarrassed and unintentionally puts the student under the spotlight; does not take the matter personally [panic or agitation] and think of themselves (educators) like fire fighters). Lsa will draw an image in the student`s mind that s/he is not doing the job just to get paid but because s/he really cares (indirectly asking him to give you the opportunity to see you as a person he can trust). Lsa will be prepared if the student fails (Plan B). Plan B consists of : Lsa will act "cool" like nothing has happened and still sees the strength in him that he can

succeed. Lsa will start asking open questions to see what the student had understood. Lsa will link the topic to the student`s hobbies / life experiences by making it more interesting rather than making him escape (e. g. linking Maths in everyday life situations, linking English as if the student has to fall in love with a English woman .

## **Teaching strategies that motivates learning**

Teachers in collaboration with Lsa will:

- 1) plan and share resources to provide interesting lessons (UDL for learning) that stimulate " every" student to include everyone.
- 2) design peer collaboration such as activities that interest and test their knowledge. (start first grouping peers who are Matthew`s friends such as 3: 1 [group is made up of 5 students: Matthew, 3 friends and one peer that dislikes Matthew (this peer always change throughout the year)
2. 3) help " all" students change their view of the key to success / failure from an outside factor (difficult level of the task) to an internal factor (effort, ability)
2. 4) offer choices in instructional settings
2. 5) reward " all" students for attaining personal best goals to help Matthew model the behaviour (eg: allowing free time)
2. 6) give immediate feedback. ( motivation)

## **Conclusion**

The implementation of the Behavioral Support plan will help Matthew reduce the temperaments to the point of eliminating them (practicing) and exchanging them with positive behaviour. Peer collaboration will help Matthew make more friends in a positive way and there is no need to seek attention with inappropriate behaviour. With this strategy he will learn that

respect is gained by positive behaviour. Choices will help Matthew feel included and in control. It helps his self-esteem and also his development. He learns to make decisions settings where he has some control. This helps him learn to accept situations where there is no choices to distinguish. He will learn to apply this concept by starting from school and continuing throughout the community. Rewards will motivate Matthew to learn and make him want to do the task again. The more Matthew will be rewarded, the more this will help him develop relationships, increase appropriate interactions and refine his existing skills. This will help him to develop resiliency and increase his quality of life." Ignoring the behaviour on its own is not going to help; the child will assume they are winning or getting away with the behaviour. Ignoring it and praising the good behaviour will tell the child which behaviour is appropriate" - Eileen Geiger