

Positive and negative reinforcement education essay



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In theory, children's understanding and ability in literacy, mathematics and science should be enhanced through high quality teaching. However there is a lot of debate on the best ways to teach children and how children actually learn.

It could be argued that teaching children to read is the most fundamental task for teachers. It is the case that once children have learnt to read, they can read to learn. In other words, reading is needed to access any other subject.

Gorden Wells' (1985) longitudinal project on children's language development at home and at school points out the role of stories in developing children's literacy skills and their abstract thought processes. Children most successful in literacy tests age 7 and 11 could be positively identified as having had experience of stories told or read to them before beginning school. Wells argues that the process of understanding the world presented by stories obliges children to use decontextualised language by creating a world inside their heads.

He makes even stronger claims for the importance of stories by arguing that they contribute very positively to children's wider learning. His research evidence supports the view that in order to understand a story a child has to pay particular attention to symbolic language. This requires high levels of cognitive thought. The child who listens to or reads stories regularly spends more time using these high levels of thought than the child who does not. In other words, stories make children smarter. (Wells, G. (1985) *Language, Learning and Education*. Cheltenham: NFER-Nelson).

“ Children learn to read when they are affectively engaged, when they want to read, when it matters to them to do so. Simple instruction in alphabetic and phonemic principles will not create readers of either kind. It will create children who can chant and recite alphabetic and phonemic information. We maintain that the two kinds of reading experience are both important but that they must work together and that children will attend to print when they are intrinsically motivated to be involved in literacy activities.” (Kress 1997).

According to Kress (1997: 42) classrooms should have good supplies of picture books with patterned and predictable language as these books will quickly become familiar to children. They also will be the kinds of books that children will want to come back to, will find comfort in and, as developing readers, will feel safe in their company.

Through guided reading, the teacher demonstrated that pleasure that can be gained from reading and Kress (1997, p. 44) suggests that this requires teachers to know books well in order to be able to share their enthusiasm. As Meek says, ‘ we only read well what we think well of’ (Meek 1982: 45) and

Demonstrating the pleasure to be gained from reading is an important part of shared reading experiences and that requires teachers to know books well in order to be able to share their enthusiasm. As Meek says, ‘ we only read well what we think well of’ (Meek 1982: 45) and so a deep immersion into the world of children’s literature is essential for teachers if they are to arouse enthusiasm and model positive reading behaviours in order to teach reading, teachers must become readers. Modelling and developing positive attitudes to reading is a key focus in teaching reading. Once children become aware of

what can be gained in terms of pleasure and purpose, then not only will they become self-motivated to engage in reading but good reading habits will be formed." P. 44

Meek, M. (1982) Learning to Read. London: the Bodley Head

Peacock et al (2011: p. 2) suggests that a lack of science subject knowledge combined with a lack of confidence in how to teach science may have a severely limiting effect on children's learning.

It is important that teachers plan their lessons thoroughly before teaching so that they can ensure their subject knowledge on that area is sufficient and so that they can deal with things such as time management and choosing appropriate resources.

Good planning of time management, subject knowledge and resources were evident in the science lesson that I observed. This was shown by the teacher using specific terminology, such as opaque, translucent and transparent. She also had an activity planned in which the children used certain props allowing them to find the answer themselves; through observation.

Furthermore, good planning allowed her to manage time as she had planned a clear introduction; where the children recapped what they already had learnt, a development section; where they were able to independently find out answers through observation and then they come back together for a plenary.

Planning the lesson well allowed the different sections of the lesson to flow well and the teacher was able to plan it in a way to address whether the <https://assignbuster.com/positive-and-negative-reinforcement-education-essay/>

children had learnt what she had intended them to. She did this by observing their knowledge at the beginning of the lesson and then re-evaluating their knowledge during the plenary at the end; which required the children to express what they had observed.

My observation of a supply teacher's lesson in maths supports how planning is a really important factor in enhancing children's understanding. This is because her lesson was not as structured as their lessons usually were and this created a great impact on the children's learning.

I felt that she was not as able to move smoothly from one task to another and she often asked the children questions or got them to do tasks they had already done. This meant that they were not building on the knowledge they already knew. Of course recapping is important, however I feel it should be used as an introduction of the lesson or plenary rather than the main part of the lesson; as I feel children should investigate or observe independently too.

Furthermore, the supply teacher was unable to use different resources and spent all of her time either lecturing the children on the topic (rather than the lesson being student-lead) or with her back to them as she was writing on the whiteboard.

The teacher also played a really complicated maths game with the children, which did not seem to catch their attention. She spent a lot of time on the game; it was the main part of the lesson, rather than a mental starter - which would have been more appropriate. The game also did not really help with what they were learning about, which was co-ordinates.

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This shows, therefore, how important planning and using appropriate diagrams, tasks and open questions are. Preparing them on resources like interactive whiteboards or worksheets reduces times spent writing/drawing them on the board or trying to explain them, and means the teacher spends less time with her back to children.

I feel this really shows how high quality teaching really affects how the children learn. The same children were acting so differently than they were with their usual teacher. When I walked around the classroom offering help, they were less engaged with the lesson and the work they were meant to be doing - which meant they got less done. They were much chattier throughout the lesson than normal and the teacher seemed pretty unaware. When the noise rose, she did not quiet them down or settle them, meaning they continued to push her. In the end, the teaching assistant stepped in and started settling some of the children, which I've never seen her do in lessons with their normal teacher.

I feel the negative change in the children's behaviour was mostly due to the lack of behavioural management, lack of preparation and not knowing the individual children well.

Conclusion

Bishop et al (1993: 1) propose that there are " four groups of influences which appear to be of crucial importance for learners of mathematics." They suggest these four groups are the society in which the mathematics is taking place; out-of-school knowledge; teaching materials and aids; and the teacher themselves.

Although children's understanding in literacy, mathematics and science can be enhanced through high quality teaching and learning, this is not the only factor that can enhance their understanding.