

Behaviour management flashcard



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

This essay will compare and contrast two theories of behaviour management by Carl Rogers and BF Skinner and argue ways in which one of these theories could be implemented for a particular context and practice. Roger's theory is based on a humanistic approach, while Skinner's theory takes a behaviourist approach; each theory has both benefits and shortcomings. Their views form opposite ends of the learning spectrum. These theories will be examined as their respective works address the underlying issue of how children learn to behave.

This essay will also discuss the advantages of teachers creating a positive and happy learning environment in the classroom. Teachers need to carefully plan a behaviour management theory/model that closely reflects their personal philosophy and ultimately, assists them to engage and achieve learning outcomes for their cohort of students. Behaviour management skills are essential for pre-service teachers and teachers. Establishing yourself confidently with your class – whichever theory/theories of behaviour management you prescribe to – is an important first step when teaching a new class.

Groundwater-Smith, Ewing & Le Cornu (2003, pg. 255) comment: “ Many students will no longer respect the teacher solely because he or she is the teacher. They will try out the beginning teacher to see whether they are worthy of respect and trust. ” I believe creating a positive learning environment will help students to gain that respect and trust. Ewing, Lowrie & Higgs (2010) state that establishing a sense of community in the classroom is an important initial step in creating a positive learning

environment. Rogers proposes a person-centred approach in his humanistic theory.

Consequently, there is significant freedom for students. Students need to decide what type of behaviour is suitable for them, while having respect for others. Edwards & Watts (2008, pg. 28) explain: “ Carl Rogers is the most popular proponent of the child development group of theories. In the school setting, he advocates considerable freedom for children. ” Humanists believe it is fairer to prevent a problem from occurring in the first place than dealing with it as it unfolds. The central theme of their philosophy is prevention is better than cure.

Further, democratic discipline hopes to achieve educational goals: teaching self-discipline, co-operative learning in groups and fostering responsible citizenship. The practice of providing consequences for both positive and negative behaviour is the essence of Skinner’s behaviourist theory. The teacher develops a process of systematically applying rewards (reinforcements) and consequences for behaviour. Skinner developed the notion of “ operant conditioning”. The four principles of operant conditioning include: reinforcement, punishment, shaping and extinction of behaviour.

Brady & Scully (2005) point out a key challenge for the teacher in applying Skinner’s principles in classroom contexts is identifying appropriate reinforcers and punishers. Skinner’s and Rogers’ theories of how children learn represent two very different perspectives; they describe opposite ends of the learning spectrum. Skinner is a behaviourist, while Rogers is a

humanist. Both Skinner and Rogers apparently value the concept of student freedom. Where they differ is in how students utilise this freedom.

According to Skinner, the struggle for personal freedom in education can be helped best by teachers striving to improve their control of students rather than abandoning it (Skinner, 1973). For Rogers, discipline should not be imposed, however, self-discipline, should prevail. Rogers proposes students should be able to guide their own experiences. The humanistic approach by Rogers defines a teacher's role to encourage an environment of self-growth among students. Rogers (1977) suggests students possess an inner desire to become the best person they are capable of becoming – to “self-actualise”.

Humans are endowed with an actualising tendency to grow, develop, and create – Rogers (1977). Interestingly, Rogers (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994) also comments that so long as children are able to direct their own school experiences, there is little cause to fear they will make inappropriate choices. One relevant example of the significant differences between Skinner and Rogers' theories involves praise and encouragement in the classroom. The behaviourist approach by Skinner recommends the use of praise and rewards, whilst the humanist approach by Rogers relies on encouragement.

On the surface, praise and encouragement may seem similar, however, in practice, they have varying effects on students. There are numerous criticisms for Skinner's and Rogers' theories of behaviour management. It would be an advantage for teachers to be familiar with these criticisms when formulating their behaviour management plan. Porter (1996) explains

humanists criticise the behaviourist approach by Rogers for being authoritarian, and for denying students freedom of choice.

In addition, Porter (1996, pg. 95) points out a notable shortcoming of the humanist approach: “ Both students and teachers will require sophisticated verbal skills, which may preclude students with intellectual or language abilities from participation in negotiation processes. ” These students may require special assistance to participate in class discussions/negotiations in keeping with the philosophy of an inclusive school setting. Loreman, Deppler & Harvey (2005) define inclusion as full inclusion of children with various abilities in all aspects of schooling that other children are able to access and enjoy.

An inclusive school will genuinely adapt and change to create equal opportunities for all its students, as well as respecting differences. My personal behaviour management philosophy correlates most closely to Carl Rogers’ humanist theory. I work at Emanuel School, a Jewish independent school in Sydney in a middle primary context. It is a Year K-12 academically focussed school with high standards expected of both students and teachers. At Emanuel School there is a formal disciplinary procedure, including: teacher-student discussions, warnings, teacher managed consequences and lunch and after-school detentions (2011, Emanuel School).

While planning for the practicum to be undertaken as part of this unit, I intend to familiarise myself with the skills to successfully put this humanist theory into practice. I will use encouragement to engage and hopefully improve the learning outcomes for my students. Further, Arthur-Kelly, Lyons,

Butterfield, & Gordon (2006) add a prerequisite to the success of the planning phase is to have a clear understanding of your philosophy of learning and teaching, and your theoretical approach and model of classroom management. There are various strategies in relation to applying a theory into practice.

Edwards & Watts (2004) describe: an aligned approach, where you embrace one or more (non-competing) theories; a shifting approach, where you choose to embrace different theories to inform your philosophy; and an eclectic approach, where you selectively embrace various elements from a number of theories to guide your philosophy. In the first instance, I plan to start my practicum with an aligned approach to Carl Rogers, however, depending on my level of success in the classroom, I may have to adjust my planning to an aligned/shifting approach.

I imagine one of my many challenges when becoming a teacher will be to analyse and understand a student's behaviour and sense of belonging before deciding on the best behaviour management strategy. Brady & Scully (2005, pg. 112) point out Dreikurs' view of behaviour management: " Build students' sense of belonging by accentuating their strengths and utilising those strengths in learning activities. " Marsh (2004) also suggests that students who feel lonely or insecure may be highly motivated to satisfy belongingness needs, rather than be very interested in intellectual pursuits.

Conversely, how a teacher communicates to students should also be given careful consideration so they are able to appear confident in front of a class. Body language and non-verbal cues are a useful skill for teachers to develop.

Bill Rogers (2006) comments when a teacher's manner, body language, posture and communication appear confident and authoritative, students are likely to cooperate with the teacher's leadership. In conclusion, this essay compared and contrasted two theories of behaviour management by Carl Rogers and Skinner and ways they could be successfully implemented in the classroom. It examined the benefits and shortcomings of these humanist and behaviourist theories on opposite sides of the behaviour management learning spectrum. There are numerous benefits for teachers to carefully select a behaviour management theory/model that closely reflects their personal philosophy and assists them to engage and achieve learning outcomes for their students.

Teachers also need a degree of flexibility when formulating their behaviour management plan. It may be necessary to adjust a behaviour management plan after putting it into practice, depending on the particular context and cohort of students at school. A teacher can create a positive and happy learning environment with the appropriate behaviour management plan that reflects their philosophy.