Signature Assignment Psychology

Name

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Learning Theories and their classroom Implications

Learning is the process of acquiring knowledge and utilizing this knowledge to modify mental processes and behaviors. Learning is referred to as the process of adaptation and change. Major psychological theories of learning include classical conditioning, operant conditioning and social learning theory. Classical conditioning emphasized the idea that human beings learn new information through pairing or associating it with the previously learned information—Ivan Pavlov’s classical conditioning experiment on dogs provides basis to this groundbreaking theory. Operant conditioning refers to the concept of human learning on the basis of reward and punishment that we get as the consequences of committing certain actions—B. F. Skinner’s rat and pigeon experiments are the best visual depiction of this concept. Social Learning theory emphasizes the importance of observation in learning (Walter & McConnell, 1992).

The most striking theory of learning—the Social Learning Theory was presented by Albert Bandura in 1977. It propounds the most intriguing yet compelling notion about learning experiences. Bandura conducted BOBO doll experiment to demonstrate the significance of observation as a primordial element of learning. He suggested that human beings observe their models, pay close attention to them, save their actions in memory, retrieve them and apply whenever they encounter identical situations. However, continuity of learned behavior depends on the consequences that they meet after executing it. Albert Bandura is considered as one of the most influential Psychologists of 20th century; best known for his BOBO doll experiment, social learning theory and concept of self- efficacy (Walter & McConnell, 1992). A survey in 2002 ranked him as the 4th most influential Psychologist of 20th century after B. F. Skinner, Sigmund Freud and Jane Piaget.

Theories of learning help understanding the process of learning and enable us to make it more interesting for academic learning. Applying Classical Conditioning to educational setting, if a student makes association between completing one chapter daily and watching one episode of favorite TV series; he will definitely earn good grades thorough putting the required efforts in a periodical manner. Operant Conditioning can be applied as students are punished when they do not show satisfactory performance or they might be rewarded with intrinsic and extrinsic rewards when demonstrate excellent performance; it would nurture their ego and self concept and they would urge to learn more. Social learning theory can be applied to the educational setting as a classmate who performs well at short and long- term projects, attains good reputation in school by teachers in important decision- making, praise, recognition and monetary rewards; others would observe him and would try to act accordingly.

Operant Conditioning approach is the one that can be applied to every type of learning environment; learner centered, knowledge centered and assessment centered. In learner centered environment, the concept of positive and negative reinforcement can be employed to accommodate the intellectually, ethnically, socially, culturally and religiously different students. Minority students can be reinforced to participate whereas the other students might be motivated to demonstrate openness for them. In the knowledge centered environment, the same principles of operant conditioning can be applied to classroom setting for effectual learning. In the assessment centered environment, the significance of feedback is stressed to enhance students’ performance that is a form of positive reinforcement itself. Hence, Operant conditioning principle of learning has the potential to withstand all types of learning environments.

Again, I would suggest the principles of operant conditioning to the students in order to foster their learning. They might design *self- rewarding* techniques for themselves as positive reinforcements such as gifting yourself a favorite edible (chocolates, candies or snacks) upon completing certain chapters of the books while preparing for exams; completing the homework within definite portion of time and gifting yourself an independence to play the desired video game and so on.

References

Walter, T., & McConnell, J. V. (1992). Learning psychology: student manual to accompany Understanding human behavior. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich