
REVITALIZING BEHAVIOUR MODIFICATION TECHNIQUES FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING/LEARNING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper discusses behaviour modification techniques as a mean of addressing the negative behaviour exhibited by pupils in primary schools. In an attempt to discuss the techniques; the paper discuss the meaning of behaviour and its types; effective teaching, teacher's effectiveness and efficiency, factors influential to teacher's effectiveness and effective learning were discussed. Finally, the paper recommended that authorities should be organizing seminars, workshops and conferences for teachers and parents on how to bring up their children appropriately among others.

Introduction

Understanding the root causes of child's behaviour is essential, as without this it is unlikely that any behaviour strategy will be sustainable. Promoting effective teaching/learning is paramount to the development of primary education in Nigeria. Key to achieving effective teaching/learning is ensuring that class teachers have the necessary skills to approach their teaching in ways that reduce the likelihood of children misbehaving. Teachers also need to be equipped with effective skills and responses for those instances where difficult behaviour does occur. "Where teachers have good preventative and responsive skills, the likelihood of difficulties emerging or developing into incidents will be noticeably reduced" (Robert, Cesare, Steve & Lee, 2014).

Teachers face many challenges inside the classroom, starting with classroom arguments, pupils that dominate the classroom, pupils that always have excuses for not finishing their work and pupils that constantly complain about their grades. There are many ways to correct a child; behaviour modification is one of them. It is an effective way of correcting various behaviour problems and is often used to modify the behaviour of children one step at a time. The action that precedes behaviour and the action that follows it affect its likelihood of ever happening again. Parents, teachers and caregivers use reinforcement in order to encourage children to repeat good behaviours and punishments to prevent them from repeating negative behaviours. In other words, consequences that strengthen a behaviour are known as reinforcers and consequences that weaken a behaviour are known as punishments. Steve, Heather & Stephanie (2014) assert that "Behaviour modification technique may not fail when they are consistently and efficiently applied. Behaviours can be maintained or changed by their consequences; hence Behaviour modification in children is effective when the right set of consequences is used." This paper is intended as a resource to enhance the practice of teachers at primary levels in Nigeria.

Concept of Primary Education

The National Policy on Education (2013) states that, “Primary education is the education given in institutions for children aged 6 to 11 plus. Since the rest of the education system is built on it, the primary level is the key to success or failure of the whole system. The duration shall be six years.” Primary education is the foundation upon which all other levels of education are built. “It is the oldest system of education in Nigeria and its history dates back to 1842” (Jagaba, 2016).

More to that, the National Policy on Education states the goals of primary education as follows:

inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy, and the ability to communicate effectively;
lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;
give citizenship as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society;
mould the character of and develop sound attitude and morals in the child;
develop in the child the ability to adapt to the child’s changing environment;
give the child the opportunity for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child’s capacity;
Provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

From the above stated goals of primary education, one can see that item (d) pointed out the need to mould the character of the child and to develop sound attitude and morals in the child. It is against this background that this paper tries to highlight some of the behaviour modification techniques that help in effective teaching/learning in primary schools in Nigeria.

Concept of Behaviour

Behaviour could be very complex to define in clear-cut terms because of cultural differences. Every culture has its own established standards or norms of behaviour. A behaviour regarded as relevant in one culture may be abnormal or unsuitable in another culture. It is a systematic way of changing an undesirable behaviour to a desirable one. Behaviour as the way some one behaves can be good or bad, desirable or undesirable. Essuman, Nwaogu & Nwachukwu in Okorie (2012) defined behaviour as a way we behave which is either overt or covert. An overt behaviour is that behaviour which can be observed and its frequency recorded example talking aloud, laughing, crying, running, standing etc. Behaviour is the function of interaction of heredity and environment. From this definition, it is worthy to note that behaviour is modifiable, by proper manipulation of the learning process. When behaviour is modified, learning will be more effective. Therefore, learned behaviours are patterns of behaviour that are learned in an environmental setting.

Ukwueze, (2008) believes that, “behaviour is a way an individual functions in a particular situation, it is a learned experience acquired consciously or unconsciously.” An individual’s behaviour patterns are acquired experiences learned through exposure

which gradually culminate into internalization of facts that become part and parcel of the individual.

Types of Behaviour

Behaviour is of two types, these are intrinsic and extrinsic behaviour.

Intrinsic Behaviour: This is a type of actions when an individual is motivated by his/her self to act in a particular way without external reinforcement;

Extrinsic Behaviour: This is a type of actions that is motivated by external factors, it could be your teacher, peer groups, and your environment, school and the type of home one come from. These things determine the type of behaviour a student will exhibit (Okorie, 2012).

Behaviour Modification

Behaviour Modification is a systematic and scientific way of changing an undesirable behaviour to a desirable one. In recent times, however, behaviour modification has come to refer to mainly the techniques for increasing adaptive behaviour through reinforcement and decreasing maladaptive behaviour through punishment. Observable and measurable behaviours are good targets for change.

Skinner in Okonkwo (2007) defines behaviour modification as the application of the techniques of operant conditioning techniques to modify behaviour. Behaviour modification, behaviour therapy, and behaviour counselling are often used interchangeably in counselling profession Baba (2003). For the purpose of this research, the researcher would want to ascertain the behaviour modification techniques appropriate for managing disruptive behaviour exhibited by students in the classroom. Sprinthall & Sprinthall in Bagudu (2012) postulate that behaviour modification is a specific type of behaviour influence that translates the theories and principles of learning derived from experimental psychology into an applied technique for behaviour change.

Behaviour modification, behaviour therapy, and behaviour counselling are often used interchangeably in counselling profession (Akinade & Adebipe 1994). This paper intends to ascertain the behaviour modification techniques for effective teaching/learning in primary schools in Nigeria.

Behaviour Modification Techniques

Technique refers to the method of doing something in an expert manner in our various classes. Akinade (2005) viewed techniques as methods or specific procedures and skills adopted by the teacher, counsellors in securing their goals and objectives in teaching and learning relationship. Therefore, behaviour modification techniques are ways, methods, specific procedures or measures that teachers used by the teacher in order to achieve the objectives of teaching and learning. Most of the techniques used in behaviour modification are based on such theories as the Classical. Behaviour when reinforced in a positive way encourages the student to keep it up and make the bad behaviour to change to good. Technique for behaviour modification refers to establishing appropriate behaviour in individuals and discouraging those that are

undesired among the students. Some of these techniques needed to modify behaviour for effective teaching/learning in primary schools in Nigeria include:

Reinforcement

Reinforcements are the ways in which a desired behaviour is encouraged or that which increases the future frequency of a desired behaviour. Shertzer & Stone in Baba (2003) sees reinforcement as the creation of desired consequences that will strengthen or facilitate certain behaviour like patting the back, passing a smile or sometimes given of material tokens such as chocolate, sweet etc, when a person behaves properly, it is positive reinforcement. Negative reinforcement, on the other hand, increases the likelihood that a particular negative behaviour would not happen in the future. Negative reinforcement is often confused with punishment. While punishment is negative, negative reinforcement is positive. It is a positive way of reducing a particular behaviour (Sam & Nancy 2001).

Punishment

In punishment aversion stimulus is applied to correct undesirable behaviour. Punishment is the behaviour modification technique that has been over used, thus, leading to stigmatization on the mind of students (Onwuasoanya, 2006).

Systematic Desensitization

This is a behaviour modification technique where anxiety reaction is extinguished. It involves gradually introducing a student to increasingly fear arousing stimuli in such a way that his/her fear of them is gradually extinguished (Okeke, 2005). This technique was developed by Joseph Wolpe 1950s. To him a fear-response can be inhibited by substituting an activity, which is typically inhibited here, this anxiety and the response frequently substituted are relaxation and calmness.

Shaping

Waiting for appropriate target behaviour or something close to that behaviour to occur before reinforcing the behaviour is referred to as shaping. Shaping can be used to established behaviours that are not routinely exhibited. Walker and Shea in Sam and Nancy (2001) described the steps to effective shaping as follows:

- Select a target behaviour and define it;
- Observe how often the behaviour is exhibited;
- Select reinforcers; and
- Reinforce the newly established behaviour; among others.

Any behaviour that remotely resembles the target behaviour should be initially reinforced. Prompts can be used and faded. Shaping can be used for all kinds of behaviour in the classroom, including academics. Step toward successive approximation, however, must be carefully thought out; otherwise, behaviours that are not working toward desired goal may inadvertently be reinforced.

Rules

Rules create clear expectations for the children and need to define what acceptable behaviour is. These must be reinforced on a regular basis and placed in a visible place on the classroom wall. Include children in developing the rules as this will give them ownership and they will more likely to accept their terms and conditions and therefore comply for effective teaching/learning.

Praise

Praise is an effective way to encourage children to engage in the desired behaviour as it focuses on a child's effort rather than on what is actually accomplished. When teachers give genuine praise that is specific, spontaneous and well deserved, it encourages effective learning in the primary school.

Effective Teaching

Effective teaching is the chief instrument of quality education. It is essentially concerned with translating the objectives of education into action and practice. It is concern with how best to bring about pupil's learning by various activities. Effective teaching may be defined as, "the teacher's ability to stimulate students intellectually and move them emotionally to instil in them love for learning and develop suitable skills and attitudes" (Aggarwal, 2004).

Therefore, for teaching/learning to be more effective and stimulating, the teacher should try as much as he could to be effective as well as efficient and also to include some of the skills of teaching/learning in the process.

Teacher's Effectiveness and Efficiency

Teacher's Effectiveness: Means that the teacher performs well even without the teaching qualification (professional training), experience, might have not attended any in-service courses such as seminars, workshops etc. yet he performs creditably well and his students acclaim him;

Teacher's Efficiency: Means that the teacher is qualified, has the experience, looks strong with all physical qualities of a teacher including dressing and physique;

But the two words cannot be said to be the same if used in relation to the teacher. A teacher can be efficient but not effective. That means he possess all the requirements to be a teacher, but in the class, he performs poorly. On the other hand, the teacher can be effective without being efficient. That means that despite being handicap as regard professional training, experience and in-service trainings, he performs creditably well in the class (Zumuk, 2001).

Factors Influential to Teacher's Effectiveness

The teacher can become more effective if:

He constantly observes his students' behaviour to re-adjust his instructional methods to suits students of all levels;

Adequately using instructional materials for all categories and levels of his students; Encourage his students to participate in the teaching /learning process as a whole by asking appropriate questions and fairly distributing responses. (Zumuk, 2001).

Skills of Effective Teaching

Teaching is a complex craft. In some ways, it is impossible to capture in a page or two the sophistication of what good teachers can do. Yet nothing is more fundamental to achieving our goal of success for every student than high quality teaching. That is why classroom first places the teacher at the centre of improvement efforts (O'Neil, 2014).

Effective teaching uses techniques that best serve the learning needs of the pupils. O'Neil, (2014) suggested some of the skills that make effective teaching as:

Mastery of the Teaching Content: Effective teaching requires that teachers have a thorough knowledge of their subject contents and skills. Through this, they inspire in their students the love of learning. They also understand how students' best learns concepts, contents and skills.

Effective teachers use their knowledge of learning processes to determine which will be most effective to help the particular students in their classes learn successfully;

Provision of Safe Environment: For effective teaching to take effect there should be provision of safe and orderly environment, both physically and emotionally, so students can achieve their potential. Students learn best if they are in a classroom where they feel safe and confident to attempt new tasks even if at first they are unsure about how to tackle them;

Quality of Instruction: This includes elements such as effective questioning and use of assessment by teachers. Specific practices, like reviewing previous learning, providing model responses for students, giving adequate time for practice and embed skills securely and progressively introducing new learning are also elements of high quality instruction;

Functions of Effective Teaching

Motivating the pupils to learn;
Turning the children into creative beings;
Arranging conditions which assist in the growth of the child's mind and body;
Diagnosing learning problems;
Evaluating, recording and reporting. (Aggarwal, 2004).

Effective Learning

To enable students engage effectively in the learning process, a teacher should strive as much as possible to exhibit the characteristics that motivate students to learn. To achieve this, the teacher should, as well, include some rewarding teaching behaviours that, no doubt, arose students' interest to learn in his teaching task. Teaching characteristics in our classrooms are paramount to effective learning because they facilitate effective learning. Therefore, for teaching/learning to be effective and

stimulating, the teacher should try to include some of the following skills in the teaching/learning process. These include:

Set –induction Baraya (2002).

Use of Examples Chukuka (2004)

Set-Induction

This is a process or means by which a teacher makes his students to be attentive, curious and by implication be interested in the beginning of a lesson. Students learn best when incentives for learning in the classroom satisfy their own motives for enrolling in the course. It is therefore necessary for any teacher to devise some pre-planned activities for himself and his students to focus the students' attention and arouse their curiosity and interest with respect to the specific objectives. Interest is one of the greatest motivational factors in learning (Baraya 2002).

Use of Examples for Effective Teaching/Learning

To enhance effective learning in the classroom an active teacher should include illustrations and examples in his teaching or lesson. Maduewesi in Chukuka (2004) states that examples are used to clarify, explain, verify, illustrate and substantiate ideas, concept and principles. To achieve effective learning, a teacher should endeavour to include activities that will provide concrete examples to the students.

Conclusion

Behaviour modification techniques include a series of teacher-implemented activities and actions aimed at improving classroom behaviour. Encouraged behaviours might include staying seated, requesting permission to talk, remaining on task, proper care of classroom books and tools, and treating other students with respect. Discouraged behaviours might include loud or disruptive behaviour, wandering around the classroom and not completing assignments. Melissa Stand ridge from the University of Georgia reminds teachers that behavioural modification works because students work for positive response and for approval from individuals they admire.

Behaviour modification works because students copy positive responses from people they admire. Therefore teachers should try to be role models so as show good example to the students.

Effective teaching/learning in Nigerian primary schools depend on the availability of the teacher to maintain the interest that brought the students to the lesson. The important role of behaviour modification in improving student's learning should not be underrated by teachers. Effective teaching demands that teachers should demonstrate a number of teaching skills (teaching behaviours) that will enhance students' learning in the course of their lesson presentation. Recognizing and observing the major skills of teaching and behaviour modification techniques, such as reinforcement, punishment, systematic desensitization, shaping and rules, will surely create effective teaching/learning in Nigeria's primary schools.

Recommendations

In view of the fact that there are numerous behaviour modification techniques that are yet to be known by teachers and which should have been of immense benefit to them, be verbal Reinforcement (either positive or negative) should be prompt. Multiple reinforcers are likely more effective than single reinforcer.

Punishment should be corrective and not punitive and it should be with love.

Teacher's introduction of increasingly fear arousing stimuli should be supported with backed up with a very strong positive reinforcement or reinforcing stimuli.

Children inclusion in making rules for the classroom will help in minimizing disruptive behaviours in the class.

Pupils must not be denied praise when necessary.

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