Behaviorist Principles in an Educational Setting

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Shafali Hamir

ETEC 512 64A

Dr. Jennifer Shapka

When taking a closer look at behaviorism and its focus on external factors of learning, it actually overrides internal factors, which are critical to human behavior.  With this in mind, I agree that behaviorist classroom management techniques likely help create an appropriate learning environment or behaviors that are conducive for learning to occur, but are not as useful for describing how or why the learning has or hasn't occurred.

According to Stanridge (2002), “Behaviorism is primarily concerned with observable and measurable aspects of human behavior”.  For example, Fudge et al. (2008) study presents a single case experimental design about a classroom-management system (color wheel) that is used to increase time on task for young children.  In defining behavior, behaviorist-learning theories emphasize changes in behavior that result from stimulus-response associations made by the learner and “behavior is directed by stimuli” (Standridge, 2002).  The color wheel system regulates itself to being only one part of a much larger whole which does not tap into internal aspects of the learning process such as thinking, feeling or knowing.

In the video, “Behaviorism in Action”, the teacher seems clear in her expectations, is well prepared and knows exactly what is going on.  She seems to know who her students are and perhaps even who to recognize and offer praise to more so than others.  Although I agree with acknowledging individuals for completing work, praising when a job is done well, or recognizing that participating in class is valued, I do not agree that through this one can know how or why the learning has or has not occurred.  Also, the behaviors exhibited from extrinsic motivation may not continue as long as expected and the award system may need to be used repetitively.  After removing the award system, the behaviors may also stop completely.  This demonstrates that there is more to learning than extrinsic motivations.

References:

Standridge, M., (2002). Behaviorism. In M. Orey (Ed.), *Emerging perspectives on learning, teaching, and technology*.

Available online: <http://projects.coe.uga.edu/epltt/index.php?title=Behaviorism>

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