Behavioral Approach To Curriculum Evaluation

Curriculum evaluation is the process of collecting data in order to make decisions about the curriculum in question. According to White (2015) evaluation is a phase in the process of constructing and reconstructing the curricula. Its purpose is to see whether the curriculum objectives have been achieved so that modifications in them can be made if necessary. Curriculum evaluation thus involves systematically appraising and measuring the appropriateness and effectiveness of learning experiences at a particular level. Behaviorism is a systematic approach to understanding the behavior of humans and other animals.

An approach is a way of doing work. Egbetade (2017) defined an approach as someone's perspective, ideology, belief or theoretical stance on something. It includes a set of logical assumptions that could be made for better comprehension of issues. The curriculum approach refers to a way of dealing with curriculum, a way of doing, creating, designing, and thinking about the curriculum. The above defined terms are the key words that will be used in this write up. Therefore the purpose of this write-up is to clarify what behaviorism approach to curriculum evaluation is, name the proponents and their views toward the approach, and discuss what learning is according to behaviorism approach as well as looking at the strengths and weaknesses of the approach.

The Behavioral Approach is based on a blueprint, where goals and objectives are specified. Contents and activities are arranged to match with specified learning objectives. The learning outcomes are evaluated in terms of goals and objectives that are set at the beginning (Ellis, Evans & Horton, n.d). Behaviorism is primarily concerned with observable and measurable aspects of human behavior. In behaviorism human behavior is learned, thus all behavior can be unlearned and new behaviors learned in its place. According to Power (1982), the basic principle of behaviorism is: Whatever can be known about human beings must come from an observation of behavior.

Alonsabe (2009) clarified that this approach started with the idea of Frederick Taylor which is aimed at achieving efficiency. In education, behavioral approach commences with educational plans that start with the setting of goals or objectives. These are the essential ingredients in curriculum implementation such as evaluating the learning outcomes as a change of behaviors. The change of behavior specifies the measure of the accomplishment.

This approach is not only restricted to curriculum evaluation but generally underpinned by a plan of specifying goals and objectives, contents and structured activities, methodologies, and learning outcomes with matching criteria and evaluation forms. The behavioral approach is orientated to the behavioral objectives, which according to Zais (as cited in Isyska, n.d) are basically objectives in terms of the observable behavior expected of learners after instruction. This means that the behavioral approach emphasizes what learners should be able to do as a result of the teaching and learning process (Posner, 2004).

Johnson (2014) specified that, from a behaviorist point of view, learning is a relatively permanent change in behavior or behavioral potentiality that occurs as a result of experience. This change must be something that can be measured externally. The concept of the mind and

the thoughts, feelings, dispositions, emotions, or states of consciousness that may live within cannot be observed directly and therefore they are not part of the behaviorist interests. Behavioral learning pursue to describe or control the conditions or stimuli that affect an organism and cause it to respond with particular behaviors.

The advocates for behaviorism approach include Ivan Pavlov, the founder of classical conditioning and unconditioned stimulus. Classical condition, a type of associative learning, is where two stimuli occur together enough times so that they eventually become associated with each other. The result of this association is that each stimulus eventually produces a similar response. Classical conditioning only focuses on reflexive behavior (Johnson, 2014). Ivan Pavlov conducted experiments with a dog, where the stimuli was limited to the sound of a bell paired with meat powder. He trained a dog, by repeated incidences, to associate the sound of a bell with food until the dog acquired a conditioned response which is salivation at the sound of the bell. Through this pairing, the dog eventually came to salivate when just the sound of the bell was present but no meat powder. This is called classical conditioning or respondent conditioning.

In classical conditioning, the rewards are more related to interpersonal rewards. Classical conditioning may not be used directly in the classroom. However, it often can work alongside operant conditioning to reinforce learning. For example, if the overall tone of a teacher's classroom is one of praise and enjoyment in learning, the student will associate this pleasure with the specific class and will be more likely to attend. In classical conditioning, the entire class or individuals can be rewarded or punished for their specific behaviors (Renata, 2018).

B F Skinner, the founder of operant conditioning. According to Renata (2018) operant conditioning is a type of learning that happens when certain behaviors are rewarded or punished. Therefore the participant, or the learner, becomes conditioned to perform certain behaviors instead of others in the anticipation of punishment or reward. Teachers who use behavioral techniques to reinforce learning are more likely to use operant conditioning techniques. Operant conditioning often involves punishments and rewards with consistently expected results from the teacher to the classroom learners.

This form of behavioral technique could be done quite simply by a teacher offering a reward for example, praise for a job well done or punishment such as extra homework for failure to do well. Operant behavior is behavior in which one operates on the environment and stimulus is not important. Skinner called Pavlovian conditioning respondent conditioning since it was concerned with respondent behavior.

According to Skinner the past behavior may influence feature behavior depending on three types of consequences: if it had no consequence, the probability of that behavior to occur in the future is neutral; if the consequence is found pleasant, then the behavior is likely to be repeated in the future this is called positive reinforcement; if the consequence is negative, then it acts as a punishment and makes that specific behavior unlikely to appear in the future. In short learning occurs through the manipulation of positive reinforcements and punishments (Essays, 2018).

John Watson, who was highly influenced by Pavlov. He brought a degree of scientific consistency to the field by moving away from the study of consciousness, which he believed to be a very subjective entity that could not be reliably measured. According to Watson, mental events (anything happening in the conscious or unconscious mind), could not be dealt with

directly and therefore should be avoided. Instead, the study should only focus on behavior and the conditions or experiences that affect or cause-specific behavior. These are the things he believed could be objectively observed and measured (Johnson, 2014). Learning, according to Watson, occurs because of the close succession of events i.e. things that happen together. The more often they occur together, the stronger the bond or association between events. This is known as the law of contiguity.

Learning according to behaviorism approach is nothing more than the acquisition of new behavior based on environmental conditions. The behaviorism approach is relatively simple to understand because it relies only on observable behavior and describes several universal laws of behavior. Its positive and negative reinforcement techniques can be very effective such as in treatments for human disorders including autism, anxiety disorders and antisocial behavior. Behaviorism is often used by teachers who reward or punish student behaviors.

From a behaviorist perspective, the transmission of information from teacher to learner is essentially the transmission of the response appropriate to a certain stimulus. Hence, the point of education is to present the learner with the appropriate range of behavioral responses to specific stimuli and to reinforce those responses through an effective reinforcement schedule. An effective reinforcement schedule requires consistent repetition of the material; small progressive sequences of tasks; and continuous positive reinforcement. Without positive reinforcement, learned responses will quickly vanish. This is because learners will continue to modify their behavior until they receive some positive reinforcement (Berkeley, 2020).

The behavioral approach is logical and prescriptive and grounded on technical and scientific principles. It comprises paradigms or models as well as gradual and detailed strategies for formulating curriculum. Everyone concerned with behavioral objectives, should know exactly what a given behavioral objective means; and on the other hand should be able to determine to what extent it has been achieved after instruction (i.e. teaching and learning process). The behavioral curriculum approach implies a planning of specifying goals and objectives, contents and sequenced structured activities, methodologies, learning outcomes with corresponding criteria and evaluation forms and those are the things that one should take a closer look at during the evaluation process.

Alternative designations for the behavioral approach are logical-positivist, conceptual-empiricist, and experientialist, rational-scientific and technocratic. It has recently regained much of its importance with the movement towards an outcomes-based curriculum. These learning outcomes are skills, knowledge and behaviors embodied in the national curriculum and are the basis of all external exams and tests as well as reports on learners 'learning. Furthermore, the learning outcomes are fundamental requirements or benchmarks designated to hold schools and teachers accountable in terms of producing verifiable evidence of the adequacy of learners 'achievements (Isyska, n.d).

Although teachers are trying their best to ensure successful implementation of the intended curriculum, they always detect some setbacks during the evaluation process. It is difficult to work with learners with different behaviors. When it comes to behavioral approach on rewarding pleasant behaviors and punishing unpleasant behaviors in classroom, some learners might refuse to take the punishment because of the misbehaving which at the end may not help the learner. Thus behaviorism approach has advantages and limitations.

The advantages include enhancing social learning among learners. Social learning is a derivative of behaviorism and is based on the idea that learners learn by observing others and modeling behavior. In behaviorism learners are taught to observe how to use appropriate classroom behaviors, so it supports positive behaviors (Johnson, 2018). It also helps teachers to address challenging behaviors in the class. The behaviorist approach provides clear predictions. This means that explanations can be scientifically tested and support with evidence.

Real-life applications, that is to say, experiments are done on based on real life situations e.g. principles of conditioning have been applied to real-life behaviors and problems. It emphasizes objective measurement. Behaviorists used many experiments to support theories and they identified comparisons between animals and humans (McLeod, 2017). It focuses on what learners should be able to do as a result of the teaching and learning process (Posner, 2004). In this approach there is clarity and precision in the specification of outcomes.

Limitations includes: behaviorism ignored the role of contextual factors. There is no consideration of motivations, thoughts and feelings for learners. It does not look at the mind or the brain to understand the causes of abnormal behavior they assumes that the behavior represents certain learned habits, and attempts to determine how they are learned. It sees all behaviors as determined by past experiences and ignores free will.

Finally, Behaviorism is an approach about why people behave the way they do. It is basically concerned with observable behaviors that can be measured. In learning, behaviorism focuses on stimuli that create a response. Behaviorism is action-oriented and does not take into account thoughts or emotions associated with a reaction or behavior because these are not observable and not measurable. Although a mature awareness of behavior in students includes non-observable variables, several teaching situations require a behaviorist approach to be effective. However, behaviorism only provides a partial account of human behavior, which can be objectively viewed. Important factors like emotions, expectations, higher-level motivation are not considered or explained. And in behaviorism, positive behaviors are rewarded while negative behaviors are punished.

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