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The Role of Instructional Modeling in Cognitive Development

Young children learn in a variety of ways and therefore require professional educators' assistance transform the knowledge they acquire into helpful skills. Children often acquire knowledge by observing the external world and imitating others' behaviors and the ways those individuals interact with their environment (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016). This worldview finds its reflection in the so-called teacher modeling instructional strategy, or instructional modeling, which involves simply and explicitly modeling a specific learnable skill and enabling young learners to repeat it independently. When broadly defined, modeling is understood as "behavioral, cognitive, and affective changes resulting from observing the actions of others" (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016, p. 243). Modeling is valuable in early childhood education, since it allows young learners to gradually perform specific tasks. Without modeling, young learners would be placed in situations of uncertainty, in which they would be expected to understand the idea behind a required skill without help.

While there are undoubtedly intellectually precocious children who outperform their peers by finding links between the sequences of actions and results on their own, the absence of modeling during instruction for all children would deprive the majority of learners of an easy-to-follow point of reference. The use of modeling during instruction leads to some valuable outcomes, including learning new behaviors, helping learners to use abilities that they already possess, altering individuals' self-imposed restrictions on behavior, and arousing specific emotions (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016). Additionally, teacher modeling is extremely valuable, since many techniques involve dividing a skill into a set of simple and easy-to-understand segments,

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making it much easier for learners to understand the internal logic of the activity that they are supposed to complete.

One way that educators can effectively employ instructional modeling is through the fine arts and artistic activities, which are known to contribute to children's timely and healthy cognitive development (Baker, 2013). Such activities are widely used in early childhood centers, where instructional modeling can be used to enable young learners to produce simple artworks. For instance, a teacher might use modeling to explain how to create a greeting card with handprint flowers. The teacher might introduce a series of steps, including presenting the completed work as a reference and explaining the steps taken to produce the work. Then, the teacher might show the children how to complete each step and verbalize their actions in order to make sure that all the students understand the purpose of the actions they are performing. In the end, the students will understand the sequence of steps needed to transform an empty piece of paper into a colorful greeting card and create a beautiful work of art.

The concepts that young learners are expected to understand and put into practice vary in the extent to which their acquisition depends on the child's ability to engage in complex cognitive processes. Behaviorism can be successfully used to teach abstract values and social norms, such as respect for peers, to young children. Behaviorism is a theory of learning that examines the interactions between external stimuli and behaviors and the way the former can be manipulated to result in intentional positive changes in learners' responses to situations (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016). Behaviorism originates from Pavlov's studies of classical conditioning in laboratory dogs, but its application to education is more specifically addressed in Skinner's theory of operant conditioning (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016). Skinner's theory is based on the idea

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that people learn quickly because they are able to associate their behavior with either the desirable or unwanted consequences of their actions. This means that positive and negative reinforcements might motivate learners to engage in particular behaviors or, conversely, prevent them from doing something that is regarded as unacceptable.

Applying behaviorism, it would be possible to teach preschoolers and kindergarteners (3-5 years old) to follow social norms that are critical to their subsequent socialization. Examples that refer to universally recognized norms include their respecting peers and communicating with them in a polite way. Children in kindergartens spend a lot of time playing, and such activities often involve the elements of collaboration and interpersonal communication (Welchons & McIntyre, 2017). To motivate young learners to be respectful toward peers, it would be possible to resort to a set of positive reinforcements that would make politeness and respectfulness attractive and advantageous. For instance, it could be helpful to reward children for being patient while waiting for their turn to play games, asking for permission prior to using their peers' toys, expressing gratitude, and so on. Some ways to reward students would include giving verbal praise or allowing the children to play with their favorite toys or engage in activities that they prefer. In addition, positive and negative stimuli can be effectively used by introducing behavior charts and rewarding or removing stickers depending on children's attitudes toward others.

References

Baker, D. (2013). Art integration and cognitive development. *Journal for Learning through the Arts, 9*(1), 1-15.

Eggen, P. D., & Kauchak, D. P. (2016). *Education psychology: Windows on classrooms* (10th ed.). New York, NY: Pearson.

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Welchons, L. W., & McIntyre, L. L. (2017). The transition to kindergarten: Predicting socio-behavioral outcomes for children with and without disabilities. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *45*(1), 83-93.

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I removed the first phrase because it assumed that all children are curious and acquire knowledge quickly. I suggest that you add a bit more specificity here, which will improve your argument. What age children are you describing here? Do they have "typical" levels of cognitive and physical development?

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