

Psycho-Pedagogy (Master01)

Lecture 02: Theories of Motivation (Part 01)

2. Theories of Motivation

It is valuable to make a quick review about the main foundational theories in the field of motivational theory. Grasping some of the early developments and research orientations will lay a foundation for a clear vision about the changeable essence of motivation and the significant researchers who exhibited a pioneering role in this area of research.

2.1 Psychoanalysis Theory

The first motivational theory to have a crucial impact on psychology was psychoanalysis. It was developed in the nineteenth century by Sigmund Freud. He believed that motivation is instigated by the instincts of life (Eros) and death (Thanatos) which are part of the individual's unconscious.

Under this theory, Freud considered the id as the essential source of human motivation. Marx and Tombaugh (1967: 31-32) state that "The id can be best understood if it is viewed as a kind of mental manifestation of all the physiological processes. Frequently, the id is referred to as the seat of the instincts." Freud linked motivation to sexual development and accentuated the oral, anal, and genital stimulation.

Inherent in this theory, there is the idea that human beings are instigated by their physiological needs and they react in a positive way to meet them. The inadequacies of this

theory lie in its failure to take into consideration environmental, social, and cognitive factors which account for human actions.

2.2 Behaviour Learning Theory

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Freud's theory was replaced by behaviourism. Watson (1913) who was known as the "father of behaviourism" defined motivation as behaviours that can be formed or influenced by external reinforcers. Watson believed that when a reinforcement follows a behaviour, this behaviour is likely to be repeated.

Behaviourist theories, such as Pavlov's classical conditioning (1927) and Skinner's operant conditioning (1953) ignored the internal capacities of the mind in trying to define the reasons for actions. Skinner assumed that responses of the animals are shaped by external inputs from the environment and on previously learned responses. Therefore, the behaviourists were concerned with conditions or consequences that shaped behaviours. These consequences were categorized into two classes: rewards and punishments that served as critical determinants of behaviour. This means that individuals were conditioned to take actions by rewards or punishments, which champion the external forces over the internal ones. In other words, the behaviourists accentuated the stimulus-response connections and cause instead of need and reason to determine people's actions. This idea is referred to by Owens (2001: 332) as "the age-old metaphors of the carrot and the stick, which prescribes that a combination of proffering some mix of rewards and punishments is a way to motivate people in organizational life." Jung (1978: 6) who considers Skinner as an extreme behaviourist states that:

If we know the external stimulus conditions that exist when responses are learned, we can predict behaviour as well, if not better, without recourse to the influence of internal states such as motives, cognitions, and feelings.

Because these inner forces or causes are hypothetical and cannot be observed directly, these behaviourists feel we should not postulate them when we can identify the objective conditions associated with behaviour.

On this basis, behaviourists focus on the observable external forces because they are concrete and avoid internal forces such as motives, feelings, and cognitions because they are abstract. However, not everyone sustains the carrot-and-the-stick approach as propounded by the behaviourists.

According to the behaviourists, reinforcement is the key to behavioural control. When behaviours are reinforced, the likelihood that those behaviours will be repeated will increase. This interpretation for the role of reinforcement in controlling behaviours has been accepted until the 1970's when cognitivists like Deci postulate that actions can only be justified by cognitive factors, and that reinforcement undermines intrinsic motivation (IM).