Educational Implications of Dominant Theories in Developmental Psychology

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Abstract: This paper sought to find out the educational implications of three major in the learning process of children. These dominant theories are Sigmund Freud’s Psychoanalytic theory of personality, Jean Piaget’s Cognitive theory of development and behavioural theory of based mainly on the views of B.F. Skinner and John Watson. The views of these theorists were discussed in this in relation to how the educators can use available materials to influence the learners’ conduct in the classroom in order to bring about learning in the latter. After high lightening the educational implications of each of the theories, it was concluded that these learning theories are necessary and unavoidable in the learning process, since meaningful learning can hardly be achieved in a consistent manner.

Keywords: Theory, Development, Psychology, Learning, Psychoanalysis, Cognitive, Behaviour, Education.

INTRODUCTION

This paper presents the views of major theorists’ understanding of how development takes place in organisms. Their attempts aim at making available to other readers how organisms come to become whom they are today.

Conceptually, a theory is a hypothetical construct about reality. As a hypothetical construct, it is one that cannot be said to be true or false until available evidence(s) prove(s) so. All the same, right from the onset, a theory is expected to possess certain psychometric properties, namely, validity, reliability and usability.

Developmental psychology on the other hand is the scientific process of the study of how organisms learn. It is the science of both human and animal behaviour. It seeks to understand and predict human and animal behaviour. It studies developmental changes covering the life span from conception to death (Lefrancois, 2001).

There are numerous theories in developmental psychology; however, this paper will be focusing on the dominant theories in developmental psychology. They are considered dominant because a wide range of other theories’ roots or origins can be traced to these dominant theories.

Psychoanalytic theory of personality

Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939) the progenitor of psychoanalysis was a physiologist, medical doctor, psychologist and influential thinker of the early twentieth century. Working initially in close collaboration with Joseph Breuer, Freud elaborated the theory that the mind is a complex energy-system, the structural investigation of which is the proper province of psychology. He articulated and refined the concepts of the unconscious, infantile sexuality and repression, and he proposed a tripartite account of the mind’s structure all as part of a radically new conceptual and therapeutic frame of reference for the understanding of human psychological development and the treatment of abnormal mental condition (Gay, 1995). Nevertheless, the multiple manifestations of psychoanalysis as it exists today can in almost all fundamental respects be traced directly back to Freud’s original work.

Freud’s innovative treatment of human actions, dreams, and indeed of cultural artifacts as invariably possessing implicit symbolic significance has proven to be extraordinarily fruitful, and has had massive implications for a wide variety of fields including psychology, anthropology, semiotics and artistic creativity and appreciation. However, Freud’s most important and frequently re-iterated claim, that with psychoanalysis he had invented a successful science of the mind, remain the subject of much critical debate and controversy. In this critical evaluation of his psychoanalytic theory, we shall be led by the above outline in our quest to unravel and appraise the theory.
This theory is based on the assumption that the most important causes of human behaviour and personality are deep seated usually unconscious forces within individuals. Freud believed that these forces, some of which are in conflict with one another, are the root of mental disorders. (Sheldon, 2005) Although Freudian psychoanalysis has been used for treating mental disorders, it is basically a theory of human development (Ahmed, 2012).

The basic idea of Freudian ideas is the notion that human behaviour is driven by two powerful tendencies, the urge to survive and the urge to procreate. Although the urge to procreate is constantly being discouraged and prevented by the society, yet sexual urge assumed an enormous importance in Freud’s description of human development, to the extent he gave it a special term, Libido. The libido is the source of energy for the sexual urge, the urges themselves are referred to as libidinal urges (Revelle, 2010).

Levels of personality

In his personality theory, Freud identified three broad sequential stages of personality development, namely, the Id, Ego and Superego. Each of these stages are ascribed specific role in human development as described below.

The Id is the component of personality that is present at birth. It is entirely unconscious and according to Freud, it is the source of all psychic energy and therefore the primary component of personality. The Freudian infant is therefore all instincts, unlearned tendencies, and primitive reflexes. The Id is a life time source of energy, and the basic underlying motive for all human behaviour. The infant has no idea of what is possible or impossible. No sense of reality, no sense of right or wrong, no internal moral rules that govern conduct. The infant is driven by an overwhelming urge to obtain immediate satisfaction of impulses. It is very important in early life as it ensures that the infant’s needs are met. If an infant is hungry, for instance, he/she will cry until that need is met. When an individual’s personality is entirely driven by this pleasure principle he seeks to satisfy his cravings by either primary process or reflex actions.

The Ego is the personality that developed from the constant conflict between Id impulses and reality results. There is an abrupt clash between these powerful libidinal urges and reality. The Ego ensures that the impulses of the id are expressed in an acceptable manner. The Ego operates the reality principle which strives to satisfy the Id in a socially acceptable manner. The id’s impulses are satisfied through delayed gratification. The ego discharges the tension created by the unmet impulses through the secondary process by finding an object in the real world that matches the image created by the id’s primary process. The ego is thus the rational level of human personality. It grows out of a realization of what is possible and what is not. The ego develops directly as a result of a child’s experiences. Its evolvement includes the realization that delaying gratification is often a desirable thing and that long term goals sometimes require the denial of short term goals (Richard, Easterbrooks & Mistry, 2003).

The Superego is essentially the person’s conscience. Like the ego it develops from repeated contact with reality. However unlike the ego which has no conflict between the levels of personality represented by the id, because both the id and ego work exactly towards the same goal which according to Freud is satisfying the needs and urges of the individual, the third level of personality which is the superego sets itself up in direct opposite of the first two. The superego and the id are constantly in conflict.

Freud’s description of the development of these three levels of personality provides a unique account of childhood development. It traces the child’s progression through a series of five psychosexual stages. Freud believed that the major source of energy for all human behaviour and development is sexual in nature. These five stages of psychosexual development are identified and distinguished mainly through the objects or activities necessary for the satisfaction of basic urges during the stages (Kerlinger, 2012), namely, oral, anal, phallic, latency and genital.

Stages of human development:

The Oral Stage as defined by Freud is the period between 0-18months. It is concerned by the infant’s preoccupation with the mouth. That is with sucking and with eating. At this stage the child’s personality is made mainly of the id. Babies constantly seek to satisfy their urges and are not capable of delaying gratification. The over indulged infant who was excessively satisfied may become optimistic, gullible and full of admiration for others around him. Also psychoanalytic therapists sometimes attribute later eating disorders such as bulimia nervosa to developmental problems (Egbochuku, 2011). If on the other hand, this first stage of human development is characterized by frustration, that is, a situation when the mother or the caregiver refuses to meet the oral needs of the child or simply truncates the nursing sessions at will, the child’s passage through the oral stage will be characterized by suspicion, envy, pessimism and sarcasm (Stevenson, 2001).

The Anal stage is the period between 19 months – 4years. During this period the focus of gratification shifts from the mouth to the anal region. In the early part of the anal stage says Freud, the infant derives pleasure from bowel movement. At the later
stage, the child derives pleasure from withholding bowel movement or expelling the content of the bowel. Consequently, at this stage, there is a conflict between the id which is the child’s pleasure for expelling and the ego and superego which is the parental demand to withhold. If the child is over indulged, he becomes an anal retentive character who is neat, precise, orderly, meticulous, careful, obstinate, withholding, stingy and passive aggressive. Freud believes that development sometimes becomes stuck at a particular level, termed fixation or goes back to a more primitive level called regression. When on the other hand, this anal conflict is successfully resolved; the out-come is a well-trained individual who is matured, with the right attitude towards authority and material possession.

The Phallic stage is the period between 5 – 6 years. The child becomes interested in his genitals and that of others resulting in conflict. The conflict referred to here is the Oedipus complex in males and the Electra complex in females which involves the child’s unconscious desire to possess the opposite sex parent and eliminate the same sex parent.

The male child that is experiencing this sexual conflict is labeled as a victim of Oedipus complex. The implication of this is that the male’s libidinal energy has moved from the anal region to the genital region. At this point he feels attracted to his mother sexually. The sexual attraction to the mother is however inhibited by the presence of the father who is the rightful husband. On noticing that he the mother lacks a penis he began to feel that the father might as well castrate him should he notice that he has sexual arousal for the mother. Freud called this the castration anxiety. In other to resolve this castration anxiety, the child decides to identify with his father by performing male roles in the home, which in turn makes him possess the mother vicariously.

At this phallic stage also, Freud opined that female children undergo similar anxiety like their male counterparts. The root of this anxiety is based on the discovery that like their mothers they too lack penis. This lack gives rise to penis envy. As she yearns for a penis of her own, her love for the father becomes both erotic and envious. The situation according to Freud can only be resolved by the female folk through identification with their mothers by assuming female domestic roles. The natural love for a parent becomes sexual as his libidinal energy transfers from the anal region to the genitals. This identification indoctrinates the child into his appropriate role in life. By resolving this conflict the child passes on to latency period (Egbochuku, 2011).

The Latency stage is the period between 7 – 12 years. This is the period in which the sexual drive of the child is dormant. This period is marked by a loss of sexual interest in the opposite sex parent and a continued identification for same sex parent. The process of identification is very important in Freud’s theory because it involves attempt not only to behave like the parent regarding beliefs and values; in this way the child begins to develop a superego. The identification like other significant phenomenon in Freud’s theory is unconscious rather than conscious. During this stage children transfer libidinal energy into asexual activities like sports.

The Genital stage is the period between 13 -18 years. This period coincides with the onset of adolescence. At this stage the child’s energy is focused on the genitals. Following a lengthy period of sexual neutrality, the child enters the stage of adult sexuality. The hallmark of this stage is the reawaken of sexual arousal and the beginning of heterosexual attachments. The adolescents begin to assume the responsibilities of adults. During this last developmental stage the adolescents matures.

Freud’s view of the unconscious

According to Freud, the unconscious is highly deterministic, a fact which given the nature of the nineteenth century science, should not be surprising. Freud was arguably the first thinker to apply deterministic principles systematically to the sphere of the mental and to hold that the broad spectrum of human behaviour is explicable only in terms of the (usually hidden) mental processes or states which determine it. Thus instead of treating the behaviour of the neurotic as being causally inexplicable which had been the prevailing approach for centuries, Freud insisted, on the contrary, on treating it as behaviour for which it is meaningful to seek an explanation by searching for causes in terms of the mental states of the individual concerned. Hence the significance which he attributed to slips of the tongue or pen, obsessive behaviour and dreams all which, he held, are determined by hidden causes in the person’s mind, and so they reveal in covert form what would otherwise not be known at all (Kaplan-Solms, & Solms, 2000). This suggests the view that freedom of the will is, if not completely an illusion, certainly more tightly circumscribed than is commonly believed, for it follow from this that whenever we make a choice we are governed by hidden mental processes of which we are unaware and over which we have no control.

The postulate that there are such things as unconscious mental states at all is a direct function of Freud’s determinism, his reasoning here being simply that the principle of causality requires that such mental state should exist, for it is evident that there is frequently nothing in the conscious mind which can be said to cause neurotic or other behaviours. An unconscious mental process or event, for Freud, is not one which merely happens to be out of consciousness at a given time, but is rather one which cannot, except through protracted psychoanalysis, be brought to the forefront of consciousness. The postulation of such
unconscious mental states entails, of course, that the mind is not and cannot be either identified with consciousness, or an object of consciousness. To employ a much-used analogy, it is rather structurally akin to an iceberg, the bulk of it lying below the surface, exerting a dynamic and determining influence upon the party which is amenable to direct inspection the conscious mind.

Deeply associated with this view of the mind is Freud’s account of instincts or drives. Instincts, for Freud are the principal motivating forces in the mental realm, and as such they energize the mind in all of its functions. There are indefinitely large number of such instincts, but these can be reduced to a small number of basic ones, which he grouped into two broad generic categories, Eros (the life instinct), which covers all the self-preserving and erotic instincts, and Thanatos (the death instinct), which covers all the instincts towards aggression, self-destruction, and cruelty. Thus it is a mistake to interpret Freud as asserting that all human actions spring from motivations which are sexual in their origin, since those which derive from Thanatos are not sexually motivated; Thanatos is the irrational urge to destroy the source of all sexual energy and the annihilation of the self. Having said that, it is undeniably true that Freud gave sexual drives an importance and centrality in human life, human actions, and human behaviour which was new (and to man, shocking), arguing as he does that sexual drives exist and can be discerned in children from birth (the theory of infantile sexuality) and that sexual energy (libido) is the single most important motivating force in adult life. However, a crucial qualification has to be added here since Freud effectively redefined the term ‘sexuality’ to make it cover any form of pleasure which is or can be derived from the body. Thus his theory of the instincts or drives is essentially that the human being is energized or driven from birth by the desire to acquire and enhance bodily pleasure (Sammons, 1978).

Psychoanalysis in perspective

It is evident that psychoanalysis as a theory and Freud as a person have exerted such a strong influence upon the imagination of scholars and even non-psychologists, and why both the theory and practice of psychoanalysis should remain the object of a great deal of controversy. In fact, the controversy which exists in relation to Freud is more heated and multi-faceted than that relating to virtually any other post 1850 thinker (a possible exception might be Charles Darwin), with criticisms ranging from the contention that Freud’s theory was generated by logical confusions arising out of his alleged long-standing addiction to cocaine (Thornton, 1983), to the view that he made an important, but grim, empirical discovery, which he knowingly suppressed in favour of the theory of the unconscious, knowing that the latter would be more socially acceptable.

However, that Freud is a genius cannot generally be gainsaid. But the precise nature of his achievement is still the source of much debate. The supporters and followers of Freud are noted for the zeal and enthusiasm with which they espouse the doctrines of the master, to the point where many of the detractors of the movement see it as a kind of secular religion, requiring as it does an initiation process in which the aspiring psychoanalyst must himself first be analyzed. In this way, it is often alleged, the unquestioning acceptance of a set of ideological principles becomes a necessary precondition for acceptance into the movement as with most religious groupings. In reply, the exponents and supporters of psychoanalysis frequently analyze the motivations of their critics in terms of the very theory which those critics reject. And so the debate goes on.

One other point to note is the efficacy of psychoanalysis. Our stand here is that it does not follow that if Freud’s theory is unscientific, or even found later to be false, it cannot provide us with a basis for the beneficial treatment of neurotic illness because the relationship between a theory’s truth or falsity and its utility-value is far from being an isomorphic one. Although the theory upon which the use of leeches to bleed patients in eighteenth century medicine was based, was quite spurious, but patients did sometimes actually benefit from the treatment. And of course even a true theory might be badly applied, leading to negative consequences. One of the problems here might be that it is difficult to specify what counts as a cure for a neurotic illness as distinct, from a mere alleviation of the symptoms. In general, however, the efficiency of a given method of treatment is usually clinically measured by means of a control group – the proportion of patients suffering from a given disorder who are cured by a specific treatment is measured by comparison with those cured by other treatment, by no treatment at all. Such clinical tests as have been concluded indicate that the proportion of patients who have benefited from psychoanalytic treatment does not diverge significantly from the proportion who recover spontaneously or as a result of other forms of intervention in the control groups used. So, the question of the therapeutic effectiveness of psychoanalysis remains an open and a controversial one.

Cognitive Theory of Development

Jean Piaget (1896-1980) belonged to the group of theorist who believed in the intellectual development of children. Cognition is the art of knowing. Cognitive theorists are interested in how a child knows, that is, how they obtain, process and use information. Assimilation and accommodation according to Piaget lead to adaptation. The new born baby according to Piaget is a helpless individual that is lacking any storehouse of thoughts with which to reason. Assimilation involves making a response that has already been learned, or that was present at birth, while
to accommodate is to change a response. It is a modification of an activity or an ability that was learned in order to be able to conform to the environmental demands. Piaget also referred to schema in his theory which he used to describe a unit in the cognitive structure. It usually labels a specific activity for example the looking schema, the grasping schema and so on (Brown, 2008).

According to Piaget, cognitive development occurs in four stages, each marked by the child’s strikingly different perceptions of the world and different adaptations to it. Each stage is the product of learning that occurred in earlier stage, and each is a preparation for the next stage. He labeled the stages as follows: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operation and formal operation.

**Four stages of development**

Sensorimotor Period is between 0-2years. Infants at this stage acquire understanding mainly through impressions from their sensory organs. Piaget infants understand the world only in the here and now. The world is real only if it is being acted or sensed. If something is not touched, looked at, or chewed, then that thing does not exist. As the children move into early childhood their motor action is added into the source for acquiring more insights into live hence the name sensorimotor by Piaget.

Preoperational thinking is between 2 -7years. Following the acquisition of language, children enter the period of preoperational thoughts. At this stage says Piaget, children rely on perception rather than logic. He used the “conservation” experiment to support his claim, where he used different shapes of jar to hold water, though the jars were the same size and held the same quantity of water, but the preoperational child said the tall jar was bigger because it was higher in height (Lefrancois, 2001).

Concrete Operations is between 7 -11years. At this stage the child begins to rely less on perception and to think more logically. An operation is a thought, which Piaget called internalized action. The child is able to mentally reverse action from direct and concrete experiences. The concrete operational child is able to carry out mental action or more precisely an operation performed on ideas according to certain rules of logic.

Formal Operation is the period from 11 years and above. Children are able to reason logically about hypothetical situations or events at this stage. They are free from the restrictions that once bound them to the concrete world. They are in the last stage of cognitive development.

Child development in Piaget’s view point is best described as the emergence of progressively more logical forms of thought. According to Piaget’s theory, the major characteristics of thinking in each of the four developmental stages influence all aspects of children’s understanding of the world, including their notion of space, time, numbers, reality, causality and so on (Nnachi, 2008).

**Behavioural Theory**

The behaviouristic approach was introduced into American psychology through the works of B.F. Skinner (1904-1990) and John Watson (1878-1958). It led to a dramatic upheaval in psychology. They believed in the importance of the environment as the principal force in shaping development. Behaviour psychologists believe strongly in the importance of the environment as the principal force in shaping development. They were convinced that development could be understood through an analysis of specific behaviours, the circumstances leading to them and their consequences (Havard Educational Review, 2010).

Skinner called his particular brand of behaviour theory “Radical” behaviourism (Smith & Woodward, 1996). Radical behaviourism is the philosophy of the science of behaviour. It seeks to understand behaviour as a function of environmental histories of reinforcing consequences. Such a functional analysis makes it capable of producing technologies of behaviour. The applied behaviourism lies on the opposite side of the ideological spectrum as the field of cognitive science. Unlike less austere behaviourism, it does not accept private events such as thinking, perceptions, and unobservable emotions in a causal account of an organism’s behaviour; rather they are part of the organism.

By this Skinner can be said to have stood at the opposite position from humanistic psychology for his whole career since he denied human freedom and dignity. Most of his works were supposed to be based on self-observation, which caused him to become a supporter of behaviourism. Much of his self-observed theory stemmed from Thorndike’s Puzzle Box, a direct antecedent of Skinner’s Box. Skinner further expanded on Thorndike’s earlier work by introducing the concept of Reinforcement to Thorndike’ Law of Effect (Bjork, 1993). Skinner was also an advocate of behavioural engineering since he opined that people should be controlled through the systematic allocation of external rewards (Grenning, 1991). Fundamentally, Skinner believed that behaviour is maintained from one condition to another through similar or same consequences across these situations. In short, behaviours are causal factors that are influenced by the consequences.

Central to Skinner’s theory of behaviour is the concept of reinforcement. According to him, reinforcement is the central mechanism in the shaping and control of behaviour. Reinforcement simply means
strengthening of organism’s activity. Such activity could be strengthened in two forms, namely, positively or negatively. Skinner sees positive reinforcement as the strengthening of behaviour by the application of some event (like praise after some behaviour is performed) and negative reinforcement as the strengthening of behaviour by the removal or avoidance of some aversive event (for example, the opening and raising of an umbrella over one’s head on a rainy day is reinforce by the cessation of rain falling on the person).

Both types of reinforcement strengthen behaviour or increase the probability of a behaviour reoccurring; the difference is in whether the reinforcing even is something applied (positive reinforcement) or something removed or avoided (negative reinforcement). Punishment and extinction have the effect of weakening behaviour, or decreasing the future probability of a behaviour’s occurrence, by the application of an aversive stimulus/event (positive punishment or punishment by contingent stimulation), removal of a desirable stimulus (negative punishment or punishment by contingent withdraw), or the absence of a rewarding stimulus, which causes the behaviour to stop (extinction).

Schedules of reinforcement

Part of Skinner’s analysis of behaviour involved not only the power of a single instance of reinforcement, but the effect of particular schedules of reinforcement over time. This was why he initially talked of continuous reinforcement, that is, the constant delivery of reinforcement for an activity every time a specific action was performed. On the realization that continuous reinforcement was impracticable and the reinforced behaviour was prone to extinction, he then preferred what latter came to be known as his two most notable schedules of reinforcement, namely, interval (fixed or variable) and ratio (fixed or variable).

- **Interval Schedules**: These are reinforcements based on time interval delivery of fixed and variable.
- **Fixed Interval Schedule**: This is an operant conditioning principle in which reinforcements are presented at fixed time period, provided that the appropriate response is made.
- **Variable Interval Schedule**: This is also an operant conditioning principle in which behaviour is reinforced based on an average time that has expired since the last reinforcement.

At the experimental stage Skinner discovered that both Fixed Interval and Variable Interval schedules of reinforcement produces slow and methodical responses because reinforcements followed a time scale that is independent of how many responses occur. He therefore decided to deliver reinforcement of ratio formula of Fixed Ratio and Variable Ratio.

- **Fixed Ratio Schedule**: This schedule of reinforcement is based on an operant conditioning principle in which reinforcement is delivered after a specific number of responses have been emitted.
- **Variable Ratio Schedule**: It is an operant conditioning principle in which the delivery of reinforcement is based on a particular average of responses emitted by the organism.

As the experiment progressed, Skinner discovered that Variable Ratio schedule of reinforcement produced higher rates of responses than the Fixed Ratio schedules. The reason was that the organism did not know when the next reinforcement would be delivered. Consequently, in order to be on the safer side it repeats the activity more frequently so that reinforcement can also become more frequent.

**Behaviour shaping**

Another important contribution made by Skinner in the field of behaviourism is the notion of behaviour shaping through successive approximation. The notion of behaviour shaping holds that the principles of operant conditioning can be used to produce extremely complex behaviour if rewards and punishments are delivered in such a way as to encourage an organism closer and closer to the desired behaviour each time (Skinner, 1951).

In order to do this, the conditions (contingencies) required to receive the reward should shift each time the organism moves a step closer to the desired behaviour. Accordingly, Skinner opined that animal and human behaviour (including language) can be explained as a product of this type of successive approximation.

**Skinner’s conditioning of behaviour**

In conditioning, Skinner believes that behaviour can be acquired, modified or terminated using a combination of operant and respondent principles in a behavourial chain and stimulus control. Operant (or instrumental) and respondent conditioning often operate at the same time. The respondent conditionings are acts triggered by event, immediately preceding them. The triggering event is known as an eliciting stimulus (Lindal, 1987). For instance, when food lodges in your throat, you gag. The operant conditioning is a process whereby the consequences following an operant, will either decreases or increases the probability that the action will be exhibited again under the same situation (Lindal, 1987).

In the case of respondent conditioning, the organism or the learning organism plays a passive role insofar as the delivery of the conditioning and unconditioning stimulus is concerned. In the case of the experimental salivary conditioning, for example, the dog has absolutely no control over the delivery of the meat. Instead the dog stands passively while the
experimenter decide when conditional and unconditional stimuli are to be presented.

On the other hand Ivan Pavlov is associated with classical conditioning. Classical conditioning is also called learning through stimulus substitution, because it involves the repeated pairing of two stimuli so that a previously neutral (conditioned) stimulus eventually comes to elicit the same response (conditioned response) that was previously evoked by the first stimulus (unconditioned stimulus).

However, Skinner did not agree that classical conditioning was useful for explaining much important human behaviour. Skinner believed that a response will be rewarded if that response was given a positive reinforcement and that a response will be suppressed if that response was punished. Anything that increases the probability of a response occurring is said to be reinforcing. Reinforcement is positive when the addition of something such as reward leads to an increase in behaviour. The important thing is that both positive and negative reinforcement increase the probability of a response occurring.

**Educational implications these theories**

To educate is to act with purpose bearing in mind three significant questions, what do I aim to teach, How do I pass it across and who am I passing it on to. Education is directed towards action. In order to influence someone’s behaviour in a certain direction, one does not only take into account the desirability, but also the possibilities of the growing child and the educator. If education is to influence human behaviour, the pedagogy most certainly is based upon knowledge of that behaviour. For this knowledge to be reliable, it must be the result of scientific research in different fields (Lefrancois, 2001).

Sigmund Freud’s work on psychoanalysis proves to be of some importance for education in this regard, as it contains definite views on human behaviour and the ways to change it. Freud’s work has had tremendous influence upon scientific thought in various fields, and education cannot pass by his theories without a systematic investigation of them. Psychoanalysis advocates for the development of the ego so as to enable it prevail on the id. If education is to influence the behaviour of the growing child in a certain direction, the educator needs to be able to determine the personality and behaviour of the child in order to be able to influence that child. Freud believed in complete psychological behaviour which does not seem to be consciously determined, but is ultimately determined by the unconscious. This is why his psychoanalysis stresses the importance of the unconscious as a determinant of behaviour. The purpose of psychoanalysis therefore consists of making unconscious desires conscious so that the individual can condemn them instead of repressing them. Freud concludes that the educator should have psychoanalytic knowledge in order to understand the child better. Psychoanalysis gives the educator the ability to be able to enter into the heart of the matter of the problem, it brings about better self-knowledge, and the educator is able to work towards increasing the degree of prevalence of the ego on the id (Egbochuku, 2011). Psychoanalysis helps the educator to normalize the occurrence of deviant behaviour in the learner. With his knowledge of psychoanalysis the educator is able to trace the root of a deviant behaviour and through counselling helps the child get normalized in the society.

Jean Piaget studied the change in children’s thinking for approximately 60 years. His theory is one of the most significant on intellectual development currently available to educational practitioners. Piaget’s work looked at development from birth to late adolescence. He described what the average child should know and how this knowledge is acquired and how it evolves further. Piaget’s theory offers ways in which children’s thinking can be assessed in several content areas and his theoretical principles of intellectual development. There are uses of Piaget’s theory to present day education, which pertains to curriculum content. A teacher who is to teach will do well to understand the child’s understanding of the content of the lesson. Educators should be aware of a child’s cognitive level and so do not teach materials that are above his/her present cognitive ability. Since each child will be assessed according to content area, a child that is preoperational with respect to classification might be concrete operational with respect to number conservation, since a knowledge in cognitive development of the learner will help the educator a great deal. Piaget’s theory can also give educational goal. Education should be to enrich and nourish the development of children’s thinking instead of only teaching specific facts and skills in a manner that treats all children the same, since according to Piaget education should be about development and not learning. Development he says lies within the child and as such the school should provide the climate for thinking. Cognitive theory is one of the early theories that opened the present day education into the world of concrete learning. As Piaget says children learn through assimilation and as such, educators should be aware of the need to bring concrete teaching aids to the classroom so as to create a conducive environment for learning by putting up classroom displays. In order to achieve this, pre-school and primary programmes should be modelled on Piaget’s theory (Felman, 2007).

Behaviourism arose in an attempt to make psychology a science. The focus of behaviourism is on changes in observable behaviour. The two types of behaviour according to the Behaviorists are involuntary, which are reflexes in the form of Classical conditioning and voluntary, which are purposeful like the operant
conditioning. Operant conditioning says that behaviour changes according to the response they get. Behaviourists expose educators to the fact that some emotional reactions are learned through classical conditioning, and that previous experiences can influence present behaviour. Many emotions, attitudes, facts and ideas are learned in the classroom, emotional feelings can sometimes interfere with academic learning. Through Behaviourism educators have learned to associate positive, pleasant events with learning (Egbochuku, 2011). Behaviourism also encourages positive reinforcement in the classroom; the best way the educator can influence behaviour is by placing the child in an environment where classical conditioning can take place so that the child can be reinforced positively.

CONCLUSION
These dominant theories are necessary and unavoidable in the learning process. Without them it would be impossible to learn or act in a consistent manner. Conclusively present day education cannot be adjudged successful without the influence of educational theories as theories guide and organize ideas in the learning process. If cognizance is taken of these major learning theories all the learning styles and individual differences are drawn together in a theoretical framework.

REFERENCES