**SOCIAL LEARNING**

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Course: B.Ed 2nd year

Paper 3rd “ Creating an Inclusive School”

**What is Social Learning?**

The Social Learning is also known as Observational Learning. The Theory says that people can learn by watching other people perform the behaviour. Observational learning explains the nature of children to learn behaviours by watching the behaviour of the people around them, and eventually, imitating them.

One of the most influential learning theories, the Social Learning Theory (SLT), was formulated by Albert Bandura. It encompasses concepts of traditional learning theory.

With the “BOBO DOLL EXPERIMENT”, Bandura included an adult who is tasked to act aggressively toward a Bobo Doll while the children observe him. Later, Bandura let the children play inside a room with the Bobo Doll. He affirmed that these children imitated the aggressive behaviour toward the doll, which they had observed earlier

**Bandura’s 4 Principles Of Social Learning Theory**

It’s been said that Albert Bandura’s theory of social learning spans the gap between Behaviourism and Cognitivism. Social learning theory incorporates the idea of behaviour reinforcement from the former, and cognitive processes such as attention, motivation and memory from the latter. In fact, Social Learning theory is essentially – as the name suggests – an explanation of how we learn when we are in social contexts.

**The Theory**

It was [Albert Bandura](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Bandura)‘s intention to explain how children learn in social environments by observing and then imitating the behaviour of others. In essence, be believed that learning could not be fully explained simply through reinforcement, but that the presence of others was also an influence. He noticed that the consequences of an observed behaviour often determined whether or not children adopted the behaviour themselves.

Through a series of experiments, he watched children as they observed adults attacking [Bobo Dolls](http://psychology.about.com/od/classicpsychologystudies/a/bobo-doll-experiment.htm). When hit, the dolls fell over and then bounced back up again. Then children were then let loose, and imitated the aggressive behaviour of the adults. However, when they observed adults acting aggressively and then being punished, Bandura noted that the children were less willing to imitate the aggressive behaviour themselves

**Bandura’s 4 Principles Of Social Learning**

From his research Bandura formulated four principles of social learning.

**1. Attention**

We cannot learn if we are not focused on the task. If we see something as being novel or different in some way, we are more likely to make it the focus of their attention. Social contexts help to reinforce these perceptions.

**2. Retention**

We learn by internalizing information in our memories. We recall that information later when we are required to respond to a situation that is similar the situation within which we first learned the information.

**3. Reproduction**

We reproduce previously learned information (behavior, skills, knowledge) when required. However, practice through mental and physical rehearsal often improves our responses.

**4. Motivation/Reinforcement**

We need to be motivated to do anything. Often that motivation originates from our observation of someone else being rewarded or punished for something they have done or said. This usually motivates us later to do, or avoid doing, the same thing.

**How it can be applied to education**

Social modelling is a very powerful method of education. If children see positive consequences from a particular type of behaviour, they are more likely to repeat that behaviour themselves. Conversely, if negative consequences are the result, they are less likely to perform that behaviour. Novel and unique contexts often capture students’ attention, and can stand out in the memory.

Students are more motivated to pay attention if they see others around them also paying attention. Another less obvious application of this theory is to encourage students to develop their individual [self-efficacy](http://psychology.about.com/od/theoriesofpersonality/a/self_efficacy.htm) through confidence building and constructive feedback, a concept that is rooted in social learning theory.