



Теорія і методика управління освітою

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Управління поведінкою в закладах освіти засобами позитивної поведінкової підтримки

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Анотація. Мета. Метою цієї статті є аналіз наукової літератури у сфері освіти щодо використання позитивної поведінкової підтримки в закладах освіти з метою інформування освітньої практики в Україні. Позитивна поведінкова підтримка є системним підходом до управління поведінкою, що становить виклик, у закладах освіти та ґрунтується на принципах прикладного аналізу поведінки. Хоча цей підхід є найбільш ефективним за умов упровадження на рівні всього закладу, окремі його елементи можуть успішно застосовуватися ізольовано. Однією з таких стратегій є використання правил для визначення поведінкових очікувань від учнів. **Методи.** Було проведено огляд міжнародної наукової літератури з акцентом на застосування позитивної поведінкової підтримки в закладах освіти та інших установах у Великій Британії. Досвід цієї країни було обрано у зв'язку з тим, що позитивна поведінкова підтримка відносно нещодавно почала впроваджуватися в закладах освіти без системної або загальнонаціональної підтримки. Етичні засади позитивної поведінкової



підтримки полягають у покращенні якості життя осіб, які отримують послуги. Практика її реалізації може суттєво відрізнятися залежно від закладу. Оскільки застосування цього підходу ще не рекомендоване на рівні державної освітньої політики, воно з більшою ймовірністю відображає можливі шляхи впровадження в Україні. **Результати.** У дослідженні проаналізовано використання правил та поведінкових очікувань, умови їх успішного впровадження відповідно до наукових даних, а також теоретичні засади застосування правил. Запропоновано стратегії, спрямовані на зменшення кількості випадків поведінки, що становить виклик, а також на запобігання її виникненню. **Висновки.** Зроблено висновок, що позитивна поведінкова підтримка забезпечує концептуальну основу для підтримки учнів із поведінкою, що становить виклик, за умови належної підготовки педагогічних працівників у сфері прикладного аналізу поведінки, що дозволяє адаптувати практики до індивідуальних потреб учнів.

Ключові слова: поведінка, що становить виклик (небажана поведінка), прикладний аналіз поведінки, підкріплення, шкільні правила, структуроване навчання.

Managing challenging behaviour in schools using positive behaviour supports.

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Abstract: Objective: The purpose of this article was to examine the scientific literature in the field of education on the use of positive behaviour supports in schools to inform practice in Ukraine. Positive behaviour supports is a systemic approach to



managing challenging behavior in schools, based on the principles of applied behavior analysis. Although it is most effective when implemented system-wide, elements of approach can be implemented successfully in isolation. One such strategy is the use of rules to define behavioural expectations from learners. **Methods:** A review of the international literature was conducted, with a focus on application of the intervention in schools and other institutions in the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom was examined due to positive behaviour supports being recently introduced in schools, without systematic or nationwide support. The ethical underpinnings of positive behaviour supports are to improve the quality of life of individuals receiving services, yet its implementation might differ from establishment to establishment. Its use is not yet recommended practice within the department of education and therefore more likely to reflect the way it might be applied in Ukraine. **Results:** The study examined the use of rules and expectations, their successful implementation based on the research, as well as the theoretical underpins of the use of rules. Strategies are proposed to ensure the strategies will lead to a reduction of incidents of behaviours that challenge, as well as providing preemptive measures for behaviours that challenge. **Conclusion:** The author concluded that positive behavior support provides the roadmap for supporting learners with behaviours that challenge in schools when staff are adequately trained in the underlying principles of applied behaviour analysis to enable adaptation of the practices to the individual needs of the learners. **Keywords:** challenging behavior (unwanted behavior), applied behaviour analysis, reinforcement, school rules, structured teaching.

Background. Behaviours that challenge, especially within the population of students with special needs, continues to be an issue in schools worldwide, including Ukraine [1, p. 23]. An approach to understanding and managing challenging behaviour with a strong evidence base is applied behavior analysis, especially with cases of repeated and established patterns of challenging behaviour [1, p. 23].



Applied behaviour analysis is the theoretical underpinning for positive behavior supports. It focusses on preemptive measures for all students by setting up a supportive environment and using strategies that reinforce positive behaviours. The approach uses a three-tiered system, when the first tier are strategies and environmental organisation that support and benefit all learners, irrespective of needs. These strategies are beneficial for the majority of students and if implemented effectively reduce the need for more intensive interventions and supports. Tiers two and three are for supports needed for learners with additional behavioural difficulties, due to their mental health, social situation or educational needs. Tiers two and three require input from more specialist staff both inside and outside the school structure, focussing on multidisciplinary and individualised supports [14, p. 9].

Creating enabling environments is part of the New Ukrainian School policy. This is illustrated by the recommendations on classroom behavior management based on positive approaches (for example, <https://nus.org.ua/2019/09/16/10-vchytelskyh-pryjomiv-shhob-nalagodyty-dystsyplinu-v-klasi/>). There is an understanding that the responsibility for creating safe environments lies on the educational establishment and teachers (for example, <https://nus.org.ua/2022/02/10/dystsyplina-bez-kryku-j-samootsinyuvannya-svoyeyi-roboty-vchyteli-anglijskoyi-movy-pro-dosvid-vykladannya-v-nush/>). Specific training and recommendations needed for a systematic implementation of positive approaches to classroom management though are lacking.

Understanding the needs of learners with special needs is particularly acute at times of war, due to the additional impact of lack of sleep and trauma of displacement and war. Positive behaviour supports is a means of providing an individualised and supportive environment, which takes into consideration the needs of all learners.

Literature Review. Positive Behaviour Supports (PBS) is an approach that was introduced in schools in the USA in the late 1980s, as a methodological way of ensuring proactive measures are in place to support students who engage in challenging behaviour. Research has shown that introducing proactive measures to reduce incidents



of challenging behaviour is a cost-effective way to increase academic achievement in schools and reduce incidents of challenging behaviour [5, p. 50].

Gore N. et al. [13, p. 5] document the need for a common language and implementation framework for positive behaviour support. They argue for the need to establish standards and guidelines that are country and culture-specific to ensure a common context-specific understanding of its core concepts. In the United Kingdom, this was done by forming an association of different providers and developing standards for staff training and service delivery. Gore N. et al. [13, p. 7] also highlight the importance of each member of staff understanding their role in implementing positive behaviour supports, rather than it being seen as an issue for the school psychologist or behaviour specialist.

Measuring the impact of positive behaviour supports is an area discussed in the literature [13, p. 7]. As the core underpinning is to improve the quality of life of individuals and their support networks, how this impact is measured is critical to the further application of this approach. This in turn calls for assessments of quality of life that are objective and valid. These quality of life indicators can be used alongside data on the reduction in number and severity of incidents of behaviours that challenge, another key aim of a positive behaviour support approach. The focus on reducing behaviours that challenge is through developing skills needed to communicate, improve access to the community and teach skills that are needed to replace the behaviours that challenge.

Implementing whole-school positive behaviour supports requires extensive and continued staff training, which includes understanding the concepts of this approach [14, p. 30]. Carberry T. et al. [7, p. 251] point to the need for implementation fidelity, which includes an understanding of the theoretical underpinning to adapt the needs of each student, classroom and school. Barriers to implementation have been shown by research to be lack of belief in the teachers' own abilities to implement the systems and obtain positive results. Issues linked to time availability for training and resource



availability for investing in environmental changes are also seen as affecting the quality of implementation [11, p. 105].

The study by Artemenko A. [1] presents approaches to correcting challenging behaviour in children with special educational needs based on functional analysis methodology. The researcher emphasizes the importance of identifying the functions of behavioural manifestations as a prerequisite for designing effective individualized interventions and long-term preventive strategies. The presented provisions demonstrate a strong alignment with the principles of applied behaviour analysis and highlight the value of systemic organization of support within educational settings.

The issue of effectiveness and sustainability of school-wide support models is examined by Berg K. [2], who focuses on the outcomes of implementing positive behaviour support. The work highlights the relationship between consistency of implementation, staff engagement, and positive changes in both behavioural and academic indicators of students. An important contribution of the study is the identification of barriers to long-term sustainability, including the need for resources, ongoing professional training, and administrative commitment.

Within the exploration of social skill development among children with autism spectrum disorders, Bradley R. et al. [4] turn to the phenomenon of rule-governed behaviour. The researchers demonstrate that structured instructions, clarity of expectations, and systematic reinforcement create conditions for the generalization of appropriate behaviours across different educational contexts. The proposed approach expands the understanding of rules as a universal preventive tool and a mechanism for shaping positive patterns of interaction.

Attention to the creation of a safe and predictable educational environment is evident in the work of Kozyrieva L. et al. [15], where the authors address the teaching of safe behaviour to participants in the educational process. The scholars underline the importance of establishing shared rules and clear action algorithms that reduce uncertainty and anxiety among learners. These perspectives conceptually correspond

to the idea of defining explicit behavioural expectations as a foundation of positive behaviour support.

In the context of building a secure educational environment, significant contributions are offered by Moskovets L., et al. [17], who focus on psychological support for students. The researchers consider preventive activities, the development of emotional stability, and self-regulation skills as key factors in avoiding maladaptive behaviour. Such an approach strengthens the rationale for multi-tiered systems of support in which prevention becomes more important than reacting to already established difficulties.

The development of a humanistic culture of interaction within educational institutions is analysed by Serheieva L. [18], who connects it with the advancement of empathy, teachers' communication competence, and effective classroom management. The study emphasizes that a positive climate and consistency in pedagogical actions serve as conditions for maintaining desirable behaviour and preventing conflicts. These ideas complement the theoretical foundations of positive behaviour support as a system aimed at creating favourable conditions for every learner.

Statement of the Research Gap. The literature and information available for Ukrainian educators on system-wide positive behavior supports is limited. There are some articles addressing aspects of applied behaviour analysis and how this can be used with learners with behaviours that challenge [1]. These articles however focus on highly specialised interventions that require the continued support and supervision of a qualified and certified behaviour analyst.

Purpose of the study. The purpose of this study is to:

1. Propose some key components of supports for all learners that can be implemented as part of a Tier 1 system of support, namely the use of rules.
2. Present the key theoretical underpinnings that are required for practitioners to ensure the successful implementation of this strategy in their school.



Findings. One of the hallmarks of a Positive Behaviour Supports (PBS) school is to ensure the environment is set up to support individuals with special needs, for example, with token economies [2, p. 42]. An important system that is evident in schools that have adopted PBS is a system of values and rules to which everybody in the school adheres [13, p. 14]. The values and rules are reflected in all levels and areas of the school: in the school policies, in the corridors and in the classrooms. The rules and values should be appropriate to the environment and population they are supporting [3, p. 22].

There are several requirements to successfully implementing rules within a school: the rules should state in positive terms the expected behaviours of students; the number of rules should be limited to 3 to 5 rules; the rules should be clearly visible; the rules should be written in a way that the students can understand them, with visual representations for students who do not read. In addition, the rules should be discussed, modelled and practiced on a regular basis [3, p. 20], starting at the beginning of the school year with reviewing them at the beginning of every day in the morning; the students should be praised for following the rules; there should be rewards, chosen by the students, for following the rules [3, p. 21].

Depending on the ability of the students in the classroom, students should actively participate in choosing and writing the rules, and preparing the poster to be displayed in the classroom. For individuals with special needs, the rules serve as a way to teach them expected behaviours in the classroom: for example: “I put my hand up when I want to ask a question”, “I ask the teacher when I want to go to the toilet”, or “I can ask a friend for help” [3, p. 40]. The rules will be dependent on the lessons and activities, and will vary depending on the setting. A rule on the playground will be “I can ask a friend to play”, whereas a rule in the computer room might be “I sit quietly facing the computer” [3, p. 20].

The rules poster is clearly displayed and referred to regularly throughout the day, for example at the beginning of each lesson. It can also be referred to when students



are not following the rules, to remind them of the agreed behavioural expectations [10, p. 48].

In order to help teachers pay attention to the students' positive behaviours, rather than reinforce challenging behaviours with attention, following the rules needs to be linked to a reward system [9, p. 39]. Students can then regularly be reminded of the reward they are working towards, either individually, as a class or as a school. A choice of rewards can be offered to students for them to choose, and can include free and easy to implement activities, such as watching a film or obtaining an extended break time. Students can then earn tokens for when they follow the rules, which are put in a pot at the end of the day. When the pot is full, the class obtains their reward. The teacher then has control over the quantity of tokens given to students and the frequency of the reward. All staff within the school are included in this process, such as the head teacher and canteen staff.

As mentioned above, rules act as a social support to teach classroom, playground, corridor and canteen expectations to students with special needs. The social supports students need will vary from class to class, from lesson to lesson, and change throughout the academic year. The system of rules therefore needs to be flexible and adaptable, so that new rules can be introduced when a recurring problem behaviour is happening in the classroom and an old rule can be removed when that rule is consistently being followed. For example, in a classroom where at the beginning of the academic year students were in-seat, but by the second semester students are not remaining in their seats during lessons, a new rule can be introduced to address this issue, for example "I remain in my seat when the teacher is talking".

Although Drew [10, p. 50] argues that rules can marginalise students with special needs if the standards set cannot be met by them, rules and values which are written in behavioural, specific and measurable terms (e.g. "I will raise my hand" or "I will ask a friend to play") instead of general, abstract terms ("I will be kind to my friends", or "I will be considerate in my interactions with friends") ensure that all students can



participate in rule-following and be rewarded, both individually and as a class, for following the rules and adhering to the school's values.

In order for rules to be successful, their behavioural underpinnings need to be clear to teachers and teacher assistants who implement them. Some key concepts that are at play in rule implementation are: reinforcement, reinforcers, motivation and the matching law [8, p. G-10, G-13].

The fundamental theoretical underpinning of applied behaviour analysis is the concept of reinforcement: behaviour is learned through reinforcement. Reinforcement is a change in the environment following a behaviour that will increase the likelihood of that behaviour occurring again [8, p. G-13]. The teacher asks "What is the capital of France?", the learner responds "Paris", the teacher says "You're correct". That response will now become part of the learner's repertoire. The same applies for rule-following. When a rule is set "I will raise my hand when I need to speak", if the teacher allows the learner to ask a question, the likelihood of that behaviour occurring again in the future increases. Within the context of rules and expectations in a classroom, these rules will not be followed unless rule-following behaviour is specifically reinforced.

Within the context of reinforcement, the reinforcer is the item or activity that will reinforce the behaviour. There are no standard reinforcers that will work with all students: what is a reinforcer for one person's behaviour might not be a reinforcer for another person's [8, p. G-13]. As regards reinforcing rule-following, different strategies can be used to reinforce these behaviours, with a variety of different reinforcers. In order to ensure the teacher is reinforcing a behaviour, they need to have assessed each learner's reinforcer, either by observing what the learner enjoys engaging in or by asking the learner, potentially by offering from a list of possible reinforcers to choose.

Motivation is tightly linked to reinforcement and the use of reinforcers, so must be understood within this context. Motivation is part of the contingency that will trigger the reaction to follow the rule, as long as the reinforcer is effective ([8, p. G-



10]. The effectiveness of the reinforcer will depend on its availability to the learner outside of situations when it is contingent on following the rules. For example, if one day the rule-following behaviour occurs because it is being reinforced by access to a longer break, the next day this reinforcer might have lost its effect if it is offered directly after the learner has just had a break.

Within the context of understanding and managing behaviour that challenges, a key concept is the matching law: when two behaviours are competing, the behaviour that is reinforced will occur [8, p. G-10]. In terms of rule following, the option is to follow the rule or to not follow the rule. If not following the rule is more reinforcing to the learner than following the rule, the learner will not follow the rule. For example, the learner follows the rule and the teacher offers praise, the learner does not follow the rule and his peers look at him. Attention from peers in this case might be a more powerful reinforcer for the learner, which is why the rule breaking behaviour persists. Understanding the reinforcer for problem behaviour, in this case rule-breaking, is therefore required.

Conclusion. Positive behaviour supports is a whole school system, where every single person involved in the school needs to be involved and play an active role. This includes the head teacher, the learner, the teachers, the parents. Implementing systems-wide positive behaviour supports demands a high level of resources, both financial (for example for training) as well as time. Some aspects of it can however be used to improve the management of students' behaviour. One of these strategies is the use of rules, when the contingencies that support their successful implementation are understood. Using systems for establishing rules and values within the school is one of the ways to reduce incidents of challenging behaviour. This approach also facilitates setting clear social expectations to students with special needs. As part of a wider approach of positive behaviour supports, it is a low-technology method that can be introduced by teachers with limited resources and training. Research has shown that such approaches to managing challenging behaviour can not only reduce incidents of



challenging behaviour, but also increase academic achievement and improve staff wellbeing.

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