2nd Essay

Rules will only work if the students are rewarded for their good behaviors and punished for their bad behaviors

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798 words

For students, whether they go to public school or language school, there must be some rules that they have to follow. I also had to follow those rules in my schooldays. However, it has been a pretty long time since I graduated from all the public schools. So I’ll talk about the language schools that I attended in Canada instead. I am also planning to explain my personal experience to train my puppies in relation to student training.

Right after I got the English Tour Guide License, I went to Canada to take the ESL course in Hawthorn Vancouver. At first, I hardly got a chance to speak my native language because there was no Korean in my class. Soon after, I could meet some Korean students from other classes and we naturally spoke Korean to each other. It was very delightful to clearly understand what other people said and tell what I wanted to say. However, there was a school policy that all the students must spoke only English. If a teacher found a person who spoke his/her native language, he/she got a yellow card. Three yellow cards were replaced with a red card and the student with a red card had to go back home on that day. A student who got three red cards had failed to get a certificate. The good thing was that we could trade a yellow card for green card when a teacher recognized we tried to speak English very hard. A student who had three green cards even got a chance to become a student of the month. In such a manner, the students could make up for their mistakes. Requiring students to speak only English helped us become more comfortable and confident in expressing ourselves in English.

After Hawthorn Vancouver, I entered into Arbutus College to study translation and interpretation. To translate and interpret between two languages, we had to use Korean from time to time. Therefore, the English only policy was not as important as it was in the previous school. Instead, the attendance policy was considered more important because regular attendance was essential to ensure the students were successful in their studies about the course. On the first day, the principal emphasized that less than 70% of the attendance will result in failure for the certificate. However, all the school teachers did not care about it so much. Students were responsible for notifying the supervisor of absence or late arrival and the rule was all up to them. To encourage every student to finish the course successfully, we decided to pay one dollar for late attendance or absence. We applied positive punishment to ourselves. At first, it seemed to work. But as time went by, more students were late or absent and they paid the money too easily. I saw some of them eventually failed the course. It was probably because one dollar was not enough for punishment or there might have been something else in that failure.

I described my experiences about English only policy and attendance policy over two paragraphs above. One school used a combined method of positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, and positive punishment. In contrast, at the other school, the students used only positive punishment method. What if the second school had adopted positive reinforcement method? For example, they could have arranged a part time job for a good student such as translation or interpretation. Because we were all adult learners who had strong motivations, I think it might have worked. Thinking about training puppies, only repeated rewards can make them do the desired behaviors. If a trainer punishes them by yelling or hitting when they make a mistake, it just makes them confused because they don’t understand what the punishment means or why they get it. On the contrary, their strong motivation to get some foods lets them think and finally learn what the trainer wants. In that regards, the second school might have failed to reinforce the students’ motivations.

The famous psychologist, B.F. Skinner said that “A person who has been punished is not thereby simply less inclined to behave in a given way; at best, he learns how to avoid punishment.” I support his idea. Punishment itself may cause offense to the students or they probably don’t get the point of the punishment just like puppies. I would like to apply Hawthorn Vancouver’s combined method to my future students. When a student breaks a rule, I will give him/her an appropriate punishment like writing a letter of apology. However, if he/she shows improvement, I’ll make up for the punishment by remitting it. Isn’t it cool?