

Cover sheet.

For this assignment I have used the following:-

Part 1: Develop an infographic

Part 2: Concept of holistic development

Part 3: Examples to highlight Maslow's significance in understanding child development.

Statement for the use of AI.

I acknowledge the use of Co-pilot between 3.11.25 – 28.11.25 to research and proof read.

I used the prompt(s):

1. Theorists views.
2. Welsh Government Policies.
3. Proof reading.

Part 1.

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs is one of the best-known explanations of human motivation. From a humanistic standpoint, Maslow (1943, 1954) argued that people are motivated by a set of needs arranged in a hierarchy. At the bottom are physiological needs, such as food, water, sleep and shelter, which are essential for survival. Above these are safety needs, including security, stability and protection from danger. The third level, love and belonging, involves close relationships, friendship and feeling part of a group or community. Esteem needs form the fourth level and include self-respect, a sense of achievement and recognition from others. At the top of the hierarchy is self-actualisation, which Maslow described as the drive to realise one's potential and pursue personal growth and fulfilment. He suggested that lower-level needs usually have to be sufficiently met before higher-level needs become the main focus of motivation. This sequence is often shown visually as a pyramid, as in Figure 1.

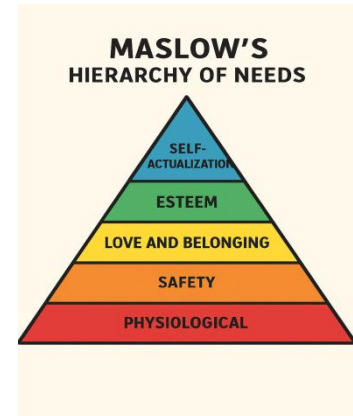


Figure 1 presents a straightforward visual of Maslow's hierarchy. It uses the familiar five-step pyramid, with each coloured layer labelled as physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualisation. The broad red base stands for basic physiological demands such as food, water and sleep, with the orange band above representing safety needs like security and protection. The yellow band shows love and belonging, the green band indicates esteem, and the narrow blue peak represents self-actualisation as the highest level. Overall, the image illustrates Maslow's view that lower, more basic needs form the foundation for higher psychological needs and that people tend to move upwards through the levels as their more fundamental needs are reasonably satisfied. As an introductory summary, the infographic is clear and easy to remember, which explains its popularity in textbooks and training.

However, although Figure 1 gives a clear and attractive summary of Maslow's hierarchy, it also reveals several issues in how the theory is commonly understood. The five-level pyramid is simple and memorable, but that same simplicity can be misleading. The image suggests that motivation follows a neat, step-by-step path from the bottom to the top, when in reality human behaviour is usually more complicated and less orderly.

A major criticism is that the infographic makes the hierarchy seem too rigid. The separate layers give the impression that a person must complete one level before moving to the next. This supports a literal "climbing the pyramid" idea. In everyday life, though, people often pursue different needs at the same time. For instance, students may look for esteem and self-actualisation through study while still facing financial or housing problems, and some people may put moral or political commitments ahead of their own safety, such as activists who risk arrest or harm for a cause they believe in. Parents may sacrifice their own esteem or self-actualisation needs in order to provide for their children's safety and belonging. The diagram does not show these overlaps or trade-offs, so it simplifies how motivation actually works.

It is also important to recognise that Maslow did not derive his hierarchy from rigorous experimental research. Instead, the five levels of need were developed from his clinical impressions, his reading of biographies and his own ideas about psychologically "healthy" individuals. As a result, the structure of the hierarchy reflects Maslow's personal and cultural assumptions rather than being firmly grounded in empirical evidence, which calls into question how far these needs can be treated as universal. Figure 1, with its clean lines and solid colours, does

not communicate this lack of strong evidence and can unintentionally make the theory appear more scientific than it really is.

The image further makes the hierarchy appear universal and unquestioned. Nothing in the figure suggests that Maslow's theory has been criticised or that other motivation theories exist. This smooth, finished look may lead viewers to treat the hierarchy as an established fact instead of a contested idea. At university level, where students are expected to evaluate theories rather than simply accept them, this can be a problem, as the infographic may discourage critical thinking and make it seem as if the pyramid is the only or best way to understand human motivation.

The way self-actualisation is placed at the top also raises cultural questions. It highlights personal growth and fulfilment as the highest goal, reflecting Western, individualistic values. In many collectivist or religious cultures, social harmony, family duties or spiritual commitments may matter more than individual self-fulfilment, even when basic needs are not fully met. The pyramid does not show that people in different cultural contexts might arrange or interpret needs differently, or that self-actualisation might not be viewed as the final aim of life. In this sense, Figure 1 risks presenting one culturally specific vision of a "good life" as if it were applicable to everyone.

In addition, the pyramid focuses on inner psychological needs and says little about wider social and structural barriers, such as poverty, discrimination or limited access to education and healthcare, which can prevent people from meeting their needs. By concentrating on internal levels, the figure may unintentionally suggest that failing to reach higher levels is mainly a matter of individual circumstances, effort or choice. In reality, many people are constrained by economic hardship, systemic racism, gender inequality or disability, which limit their opportunities regardless of their motivation.

Despite these problems, Figure 1 still has value as a teaching tool. It helps beginners distinguish basic survival needs from higher psychological ones and introduces the general idea behind Maslow's theory in a simple, visual way. However, it should be used as a simplified starting point for critical discussion rather than as a complete and accurate model of human motivation. A more developed version of the infographic could therefore build on the basic pyramid by adding notes, examples and alternative pathways, encouraging viewers not only to understand Maslow's model but also to question and refine it in light of contemporary evidence.

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Part 2.

Child development looks at how children grow, learn, and change from birth through adolescence. It includes the physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes that happen as they mature. Their development is influenced by both biological factors, like genetics and brain growth and environmental factors such as family, culture, education, and life experiences.

1. Physical Development

Physical development refers to changes in body size, proportions, and physical abilities. It includes growth in height and weight, as well as the maturation of the brain and nervous system. This domain also encompasses the advancement of fine motor skills (such as writing and drawing) and gross motor skills (including walking, running, and maintaining balance).

2. Cognitive Development

Cognitive development involves the processes by which children think, learn, and solve problems. It includes language acquisition, as well as the development of memory, attention, and reasoning abilities. Foundational theories in this area, Piaget emphasize developmental stages of cognition (Piaget, 1952). and Vygotsky highlights the role of social interaction in learning (Vygotsky, 1962).

3. Emotional Development

Emotional development concerns children's ability to understand, express, and manage emotions. It involves the emergence of self-awareness and self-regulation, the formation of identity, and the development of coping strategies and resilience in response to challenges.

4. Social Development

Social development focuses on how children form and maintain relationships with family members, peers, and other adults. It includes learning social norms, communication skills, and appropriate social behaviours. Key components of this domain include empathy, cooperation, and the ability to resolve conflicts.

5. Moral Development

Moral development refers to the evolving understanding of right and wrong, the formation of personal values, and the development of ethical reasoning. This domain is shaped significantly by family influences, cultural context, and personal experiences.

Holistic child development is an approach that considers all dimensions of a child's growth, including physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and sometimes moral or spiritual development Care Learning (2024.), Empowered Parents (2024.) These areas are interconnected, meaning that progress or difficulties in one domain can influence others Care Learning (2024.). A holistic perspective also recognizes the child's relationships, culture, and community as vital components of development Sage Publications (N.D.) In practice, early childhood programs foster environments that support development across all domains, both at home and in educational settings Sage Publications (N.D.)

Traditional educational approaches often focus heavily on academic achievement, neglecting social and emotional development. By addressing all developmental domains, holistic approaches promote resilience, wellbeing, and long-term flourishing Empowered Parents(2024) Hive Education, (N.D.). This perspective encourages teachers, parents, and caregivers to create supportive environments rather than focusing solely on measurable outcomes.

Holistic child development is closely linked to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which explains why meeting foundational needs are essential for higher-level growth. Children must first have their physiological needs met, including food, water, sleep, and shelter, to engage in learning or social activities. Safety needs, including physical security and emotional stability, provide the foundation for exploration and cognitive growth.

Below, 3 different views of holistic development.

Sage Publications (N.D.) *Early childhood development resources.*

Te Whariki Early Childhood Curriculum New Zealand	Karvatus Early Childhood Education & Care Finland	Reggio Emilia An Approach to Early Years Education Italy
Holistic Thinking 'To grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society'	Holistic Thinking 'Growing and learning are understood to constitute a life-long process ... Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is a ... whole comprising the intertwining dimensions of care, education and teaching. These dimensions receive a different emphasis according to the situation, and the age and needs of the child'	Holistic Thinking Learning environments where experiences and methods of teaching, learning, playing and sharing common spaces are interconnected to the point that they become one thing
Holistic Development – Kotahitanga - An integrated view of development in which cognitive, social, cultural, physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions of human development are integrally interwoven - The child's whole context, the physical surroundings, the emotional context, relationships with others, and the child's immediate needs at any moment will affect and modify how a particular experience contributes to the child's development - The whole is greater than the sum of its individual experiences	Holistic Development - An integrated whole that ensures consistency and continuity in children's development - Linked to culture and constant change in society - Each child is encountered in accordance with his individual needs, personality, and family culture - Dialogue and partnership between parents and educators	Holistic Development - There is no curriculum or guidance. Instead, each year, a new series of related projects are proposed and freely chosen by the children and their teachers - The approach seeks to activate and support children's relationships with other children, family, teachers, society and environment, and all aspects of the surrounding world - The Early Childhood Centre is perceived as a public place for which the community has collective responsibility; 'a place of encounter and dialogue with others'

Figure 1.2 Holistic development in New Zealand, Finland and Reggio Emilia

Holistic development is best seen as a joined-up perspective rather than a single theory. Piaget, Vygotsky, Bronfenbrenner, Maslow, Erikson, Montessori and Gardner each shed light on particular aspects of what it means to grow and learn as a whole person (Piaget, 1952; Vygotsky, 1978; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Maslow, 1943; Erikson, 1950; Montessori, 1967; Gardner, 1983). Taken together, they encourage educators and practitioners to look beyond narrow academic outcomes and to consider children's physical well-being, emotional security, social networks, cultural context and individual strengths. In this sense, adopting a holistic view is not only about theory; it is also about a commitment in practice to seeing and supporting the whole child, in all the settings they move through.

In Wales, national policy places a strong emphasis on holistic development. The Curriculum for Wales requires schools and settings to design learning around four core purposes and six Areas of Learning and Experience, with guidance stressing that teaching and assessment should support the development of the whole child rather than focus solely on academic attainment (Welsh Government, 2021). This is reinforced by the *Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental well-being*, which highlights the importance of considering pupils' experiences across the curriculum, relationships, school environment and wider community, reflecting a commitment to promoting learners' overall well-being as part of everyday practice (Welsh Government, 2021).

Holistic development emphasises that children grow across interconnected domains, including cognitive, social, emotional and physical areas, and that these influence one another (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Vygotsky, 1978). One clear advantage of this approach is that it reflects how children genuinely develop in real life: factors such as well-being, relationships and environment all shape learning (Erikson, 1950; Maslow, 1943). This makes holistic development consistent with the belief that education should support the "whole child", not just academic attainment. It also promotes inclusion by recognising varied strengths. For example, valuing creativity, communication and social skills can help children who do not thrive in purely academic measures, encouraging a strengths-based rather than deficit-focused view of learners (Gardner, 1983). Holistic perspectives also align

with wider priorities around mental health and lifelong skills, recognising that confidence, resilience and identity contribute meaningfully to learning and future outcomes (Erikson, 1950; Maslow, 1943).

However, holistic development is not without challenges. One common criticism is that the concept can be vague, as different practitioners include different domains or values, making it difficult to implement consistently or assess reliably. There can also be tension between holistic aims and systems that rely heavily on testing, where academic outcomes may take priority despite policy promoting whole-child approaches (Welsh Government, 2021). Holistic expectations can also place considerable pressure on teachers and settings, who may feel responsible for meeting a wide range of emotional and social needs without the specialist training or resources required. Additionally, because ideas about what counts as a “fully developed” person vary across cultures and communities, holistic approaches inevitably involve value judgements that may not be universally shared (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Overall, holistic development has strong ethical and educational appeal, but it requires clear frameworks, realistic expectations and adequate support if it is to be applied meaningfully in practice.

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Figure 1.2 Holistic developments in New Zealand, Finland and Reggio Emilia Sources: Te Whariki (Ministry of Education, 1996); Karvatus (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2003); Reggio Emilia (Rinaldi, 2006).

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979) *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

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Part 3.

Case Study 1.

Transition in the early years is about children moving between home, early year's settings and school, and having to cope with new adults, routines and expectations. The way adults manage these moves can have a big impact on how secure children feel and how ready they are to learn.

In the first example, a two-year-old is starting nursery for the first time. The nursery uses home visits, short stay-and-play sessions, a clear key person and a gradual build-up of hours. This links to attachment theory, where a consistent adult acts as a "secure base" to help the child feel safe enough to explore (Bowlby, 1969). Involving the family closely, particularly when English is not their first language, also reflects the EYFS focus on working in partnership with parents and valuing children's home backgrounds (DfE, 2024).

The second example looks at a four-year-old moving from nursery into Reception. The school organises regular visits from the Reception teacher, creates photo transition books, offers stay and play sessions and holds joint meetings to share information about the child's speech and language needs. This shows transition as something that happens over time, not just on the first day. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory helps explain this, as it stresses how children's development is influenced by links between home, school and other services (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The final example focuses on the move from Reception to Year 1. By keeping some continuous provision and slowly increasing more formal teaching, the school helps children stay settled and engaged. This supports continuity in teaching approaches and allows adults to scaffold learning in line with children's zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). At the same time, such approaches can be hard to maintain when staff, space and accountability pressures are tight.

Overall, the three cases suggest that good transition practice is built on strong relationships, close work with parents, tailored support and consistency in children's day-to-day experiences.

Case Study 2.

Following the sudden death of their mother, siblings Noah (8) and Lily (6) moved to live with their maternal aunt. Their mother had been their primary caregiver and their father was not involved in day-to-day care. This meant the children experienced both a major bereavement and an abrupt change of home and attachment figure at the same time. In the first weeks at their new school, staff noticed that Noah became very quiet and withdrawn in class. He avoided eye contact, insisted he was "fine" when adults checked in, and appeared highly compliant, trying hard to follow rules and help staff. In contrast, Lily showed clingy and distressed behaviour at drop-off, crying and refusing to separate from her aunt. She also had sudden emotional outbursts over small incidents with peers and worried that her aunt "might go away too".

From an attachment perspective, these behaviours can be understood as different ways of coping with anxiety about caregiver availability. Bowlby (1969) argues that the loss of a primary attachment figure threatens a child's sense of security, and children may intensify attachment behaviours or try to suppress them. Noah's people-pleasing and emotional shutting down are consistent with an insecure-avoidant pattern, where the child minimises visible need in order to avoid further rejection (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Lily's clinginess and angry outbursts resemble insecure-ambivalent behaviour, where the child is unsure whether comfort will be reliably available.

School and home responded by prioritising relationships and predictability. Each child was given a named key adult in school, daily check-ins and access to a safe space when overwhelmed. The aunt maintained consistent routines and used calm, accepting responses to big emotions, while keeping their mother's memory present through photos and conversations. Over time, both children began to seek comfort from trusted adults, suggesting that new secure bases were starting to form.

Case Study 3.

In this case study, Ella is a 5-year-old in Year 1 who is finding school difficult. At the start of the year she often cries at morning drop-off, holds tightly to adults and is very reluctant to join in whole-class activities. When the class is asked to sit on the carpet or read aloud, she sometimes hides under the table. When the teacher works with her one-to-one, Ella shows good ability, but her anxiety in the school environment stops her from demonstrating this in front of others.

Instead of interpreting this as 'naughty' or 'silly' behaviour, the teacher decides to talk to Ella's parents and build a stronger partnership. In the meeting, the teacher shares positives first, such as Ella's drawing and her kindness to friends. Her parents explain there is a new baby at home and that Ella has always been shy, which may be affecting her sleep and confidence.

Together they agree a plan. Ella will have a calm and predictable drop-off where the same adult greets her each day. The teacher introduces a home to school communication book so that small successes can be shared daily. At home, parents will read familiar stories and praise her efforts. In class, the teacher avoids putting Ella on the spot to read aloud until her confidence improves. They also agree a review meeting after a few weeks to see what is working.

This can be understood through Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, as it strengthens the connection between home and school, which he calls the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). By improving communication and consistency across these settings, the adults make Ella's world more coherent and predictable, which may help to reduce her anxiety. Epstein's (1995) work on parental involvement is also evident, as Ella's parents are engaged in regular communication, supporting learning at home and shared decision-making, rather than simply being informed.

Vygotsky's theory helps explain the teaching approach. By building up Ella's participation gradually, starting with one-to-one and small-group contexts, the adults provide appropriate support within her zone of proximal development and scaffold her towards greater independence (Vygotsky, 1978). The teacher's focus on Ella's strengths and willingness to listen to the family also reflect Rogers' humanistic approach, which values empathy, unconditional positive regard and seeing the child as a whole person (Rogers, 1951).

Over time, Ella becomes calmer at drop-off and begins to join in more. This progress illustrates how effective partnership with parents, underpinned by relevant theory, can support a child's confidence, emotional wellbeing and learning.

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