

Task One: Maslow's Hierarchy - Infographic

Physiological Needs:

According to Maslow (Stoyanov, 2017) one of the most fundamental aspects of human development is physiological needs. This is where human beings strive for survival, warmth, comfort, shelter, sleep and nutrition, to satisfy their personal needs and requirements. For Maslow, humans have an innate ability to strive for a high quality of life and to further sustain oneself.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs plays a crucial role in public life and policy. Governments strive for the physiological needs of their citizens, through a variety of programmes; such as social welfare, NHS healthcare, and in the education system. For example, the Welsh Government has proposed a "Free School Meals Scheme", whereby all pupils from primary schools receive different food options at lunchtime.

Aldridge *et al.* (2012) emphasised upon the responsibility that the practitioner has in providing physiological support for families who are living below the poverty line.

Practitioners might give school uniform to some students, who are not as fortunate as others. They can support families by claiming extra entitlements, and to assess the socio-economic situation, for which the child is living in.

The spiritual and ecological experiences display a strong effect on the physiological needs of children. Barnes *et al.* (2000, cited by Thoma *et al.*, 2022), suggested that spirituality eliminates any psychosocial problems, and it also positively changes the perception of themselves. However, Bronfenbrenner (Sadownik, 2023) has proposed that children are directly influenced by different social interactions and its local environment through its 'microsystem' and 'mesosystems.'

Safety and Security Needs:

In "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs", he argues that the other important categories are safety and security needs. Maslow (Stoyanov, 2017), highlights that safety is key to

promoting a learning environment that is conducive to success. He points out that children must work in a safe and sustainable world, and that parents co-operate with practitioners, to ensure that children are protected from danger.

However, some scholars believe that young children who are exposed to a relationship with nonmaternal caregivers are at a greater risk of disruption than the child-mother connections (Belsky, 1986, 1988, 1990). It is the parents that lay the foundations for “children’s emerging competence and development” (Howes and Ritchie, 2022). Such relationships attribute to the child’s social-emotional growth.

From the practitioner’s experience, children who live in a safe environment at home, thrive academically, socially and culturally in school. However, some pupils are economically disadvantaged, and so they are not provided with “high-quality early education” (Ofsted, 2014). It is important for practitioners to work in areas of multiple deprivation, to ensure that children excel in their own academic spheres (Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, 2002).

Arnold *et al.* (2006) insinuates that the key qualities required for the children’s high-quality of education are: emotional well-being, cognitive knowledge, physical development and fine motor skills. In more developing countries, the opportunity for safety, growth and security takes precedence over the other set of features. It is achieved without the need for intervention in Western countries.

Social Needs:

Central to Maslow’s framework is the desire to be fulfilled with our social needs, exemplified with love and belonging. Bronfenbrenner (Sadownik, 2023) argues that social interactions (linkages) are an apt representation of the microsystem. It is imperative that the parents and Early Years Professionals collectively work together to ensure that children thrive academically. This makes the child’s transitions in microsystems much more efficient.

Children display their own thoughts and feelings in different ways, right before the acquisition of language. One compelling example is the research supported by Alderson *et al.* (2005), whereby premature babies in their early days of life reveal 'signs' of observation and preferences for the types of professional caregivers. Prior to their maturation, the newborn babies were able to demonstrate their self-awareness, and of the "levels of light, noise and activity around them."

For Sander (2016), one of the key determinants of friendships is propinquity. This is the belief that children have a tendency to play with others in the same physical environment. There is a perception that the children's peer preferences are often impacted by the ethnic classroom compositions (Juvonen *et al.*, 2004). Children who attend diverse schools will be exposed to different racial interactions and forge friendships between cross-ethnic peers (Howes and Wu, 1990).

The Welsh Government (2022) has proposed that one of the purposes of the "New Curriculum for Wales," is for individuals to grow as "enterprising and creative contributors", who will take risks and make a huge difference in the world. It is the responsibility of the practitioner to ensure that students work in a learning-led environment that is conducive to productivity (Sroufe, 1983).

Self-Esteem Needs:

One of the other fundamental aspects of "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs" (Stoyanov, 2017) is self-esteem. Maslow argues that self-esteem promotes self-confidence, resilience, and a strong sense of belief in ourselves. However, the thwarting of self-esteem leads itself to feelings of powerlessness, inferiority and insecurity. Humans want to be respected and not alienated from a group.

Recent studies proposed by New Zealand (Dalli, 2002), have shown that children who actively engage in different learning activities are able to construct meaningful and pleasurable experiences. They maintain social interactions between other learners, teachers, staff members and other objects. It also fully contributes to the holistic development of learning, and it engenders a sense of belonging.

There are a wide range of programmes that focus on the learners' social-emotional development. One example is the “Tools of the Mind - Play” (Bodrova and Leong, 2007), where the main objective was to explore learning and social outcomes from learners. Children experiencing this programme have displayed better social competence skills and less behaviour issues (Morris et al, 2014).

Self-Actualisation Needs:

One of the highest priorities in “Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs” is self-actualisation needs. In Montessori’s “Education and Peace” book, she argued that: “An extremely important task lies before us: actuating man’s values, thus allowing him to attain the maximum development of his energies” (1972, p. xiv). It is at this point that a small proportion of the population achieve this objective.

Froebel (Tovey, 2020) draws upon similar parallels between Maslow’s theory, by suggesting that children should have the ability to think for themselves, act creatively, and use problem-solving skills. For Froebel, freedom can only work successfully if there is an element of responsibility, respect for others, the use of natural resources, and a supportive teaching environment.

The rights of children are further emphasised in Article 12 of the “United Nations Convention on the rights of the child” (Brooker, 2008). It is the responsibility of the government to ensure that children can confidently express their own opinions, in a free and democratic society. In the same way, a Froebelian would encourage children to promote self-discipline and make strategic decisions.

Conclusion:

In Summary, Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs has a wide range of applications in Early Years Professionalism, and it plays an important role in the holistic development of children respectively.

Task Two – Holistic Child Development

Introduction:

The term 'concepts' has several underlying meanings in Early Years Professionalism. According to Mukherji (2000), the way children perceive themselves can have a massive effect on their self-image and 'self-esteem.' For example, children who are feeling loved and respected in a family-led environment, have a higher level of attainment in Education and greater quality of support.

For Dweck (2010), children from a young age display different concepts, through its learning capabilities. She argues that some children are born with high levels of intelligence, and so they have a 'fixed' mindset. They are less receptive to ongoing change and further improvement. Whereas, the other children develop their own social intellect over time, from its past experiences and Education.

It is unequivocal that students with a 'growth' mindset are more likely to take on new opportunities and challenges (Humphrey, 2004). This essay will focus upon the concepts of Holistic Child Development, and its applications towards ECCE inclusion, relationships, outdoor play and well-being.

Inclusion, Partnerships and Children:

One of the most crucial aspects of Holistic Child Development is emotional attachment. Bowlby (1972, cited by Lindon, 2016) has suggested that mothers need to be highly available to their own young children, and that the disruption of this social interaction places children at a greater risk of loneliness and emotional distress. It is the family that lays the main foundations for building a rapport between the child itself.

Similarly, Tizard (1986) has emphasised on the important role that the mother plays in developing strong attachments between children. Young children need social security, unwavering love and commitments from their parents, to ensure that they successfully thrive in life. However, the social movement of feminism (Rutter,

1972) has meant that attitudes towards family life were also challenged. It has also undermined the status and the shared responsibility of motherhood.

In her recent work, Page (2013, cited by Lindon, 2016) has argued that practitioners must ensure that they maintain professionalism and provide support for students in their own learning environment. She has also coined the term 'Professional Love,' just as the mother is able to intellectualise with her own child; so too the practitioner should have the permission to take care and 'love' their children (Page, 2014). This would positively shape the perception of a professional childcare quality (Elfer, 2011).

The practitioner must encourage students to use critical thinking skills in their own private and public speech. Alexander Luria, a well-known Russian physiologist, believes that private speech "actually helps children to make their behaviour more deliberate" (Luria, 1969, cited by Elena Bodrova, 2007). In a social experiment, children that were repeatedly instructed in saying 'squeeze, squeeze' twice using private speech, had greater self-discipline.

Using dialogues will ultimately allow practitioners to determine the level of criticality and creativity that the student displays (Saran and Neisser, 2004). In this long term, this will help learners to acquire their self-reflection (Piaget, 1977).

Outdoor Play:

One of the other fundamental aspects of Holistic Child Development is outdoor play. For most Vygotskians, play acts as a vehicle for the child's acquisition of effective communication skills (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009). It is regarded, by some, as a 'leading activity,' and it also promotes life-long learning for children. Play also provides a meaningful context for progression and development (Vygotsky, 1933).

For Piaget, children gain a wider insight into the world and its social surroundings through their schemas (Chris Athey, 1990, cited by Jennie Lindon, 2012). For example, children aged 18 to 24 months old, use their dominant sensorimotor, to incorporate the first types of symbols. They experience the world around them; through their words,

logic, actions and line of reasoning. For babies and toddlers, the acquisition of language is gained from the people they are interacting with.

Early Years Education in the UK has undergone huge changes in the first half of the 20th century. There was a strong emphasis on children being physically active, in their outdoor environments. For example, Margaret McMillian has pioneered for an open-air Nursery and fulfilling play-led activities for disadvantaged young children. She truly believed that children would achieve their academic capability, through active learning, problem-solving skills, and first-hand experiences (Lindon, 2012).

However, children who participate in outdoor activities build upon resilience, as the brain is more flexible to navigate and respond to difficult situations (Sivily, 2016). Similarly, Froebel (Tovey, 2020) has argued that children who engage in the natural world, have a deeper understanding of themselves and the “interconnectedness of all living things.” They resonate strongly with the environment, and all of the other creatures that are in the garden.

Well-being:

One of the key components of Holistic Child Development in Early Years Education is mental health and well-being. According to Play Wales (2016), the practitioner has a responsibility to promote children’s play in their learning environment. It is a legitimate behaviour and a fundamental human right for all, and “this applies to children either playing indoors or outdoors.” This will ensure that children’s play is at the forefront of learning and a positive experience for everyone (Lester, 2010).

For Froebel (Tovey, 2020), well-being and creativity gives students the opportunity to connect with their inner and outer worlds of thoughts, feelings, things or ideas, and to reflect upon both of their past experiences. It fuels imagination, criticality, problem solving skills and innovation amongst young learners. The professional who freely promotes indoor or outdoor child-initiative plays, will effectively allow its learners to gain creative thinking skills (Robson 2017, cited by Play Wales, 2016).

However, Bruce (2015) believes that a good professional must use observation skills to measure the current progress of a student's learning. Using social dialogues is essential for practitioners to deepen their own further understanding of the lives and well-being of students, and their quality of education. In this way, the practitioner that is responsive to the child's needs and adjusts the quality of play activity, is truly promoting the idea and development of self-efficacy and well-being (Bandura, 1997, cited by Play, 2022).

In the last decade, the Welsh Government has proposed a series of legislation that focuses on the holistic well-being of students. One compelling example is the "Wellbeing of Future Generations Act" (Welsh Government 2015), in which public bodies have a legal obligation to promote the social, cultural, technological and economic welfare of Welsh citizens. The New Curriculum for Wales 2022 places the well-being of children at the heart of Areas and Learning experiences.

Conclusion:

In summary, the concept of 'Holistic Child Development' is of extreme importance in Early Years Professionalism. It acts as a foundation for the child's future learning, wellbeing and its growth mindset. The professional has a duty to nurture and shape the child's development, in ensuring that they achieve their full potential in their academic and social spheres.

Task Three - Applications of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

Introduction:

In "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs" (Stoyanov, 2017), he argues that the five most fundamental human needs are: physiological, safety, love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualisation. For Maslow, humans have an innate ability to strive for growth, self-independence and identity. They are mostly driven by their own conscious attitudes towards achieving self-actualisation.

Maslow's theory plays a crucial role in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). It advocates practitioners to focus on the children's physical, mental and cognitive well-being and their holistic development (Brodie, 2024). They have a responsibility to create a safe learning environment for their students, and to foster a positive relationship between parents.

The main aim of this paper is to focus on the applications of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in the Early Childhood Education (ECE), such as: Understanding the basic needs of children, sustainable play-based learning environments, and to supporting children's transitions in school and at home. These are the three key dimensions of successful pedagogy in the Early Years Education Sector.

Understanding the basic needs of children:

One of the fundamental aspects of childcare quality is the relationship between the child and the teacher. According to Jamil *et al.* (2014), responsive teaching is essential in shaping the social and emotional climate of the learning-led environment. For example, the practitioner must actively engage in social interactions with the children in the classroom and fully respond to back-and-forth exchanges to scaffold their relationship (security) and personal development (Hamre *et al.*, 2014).

Similarly, there is a perception that children who maintain social relationships with their teachers were able to gain wider social competence (Spikes et al, 2008, cited by Vu,

2016). In this instance, four-year-olds “who were observed to have secure relationships with their teachers” were better accepted by their peers than children who did not establish strong connections with their teachers. They were able to demonstrate a wide range of ability to promote prosocial behaviour in the classroom.

For most Vygotskians, shared activity acts as a foundation for students to develop their own social contexts for learning (Bodrova and Elena, 2007). The “practitioner might collectively plan the size of the groups they will be working with, so that educational dialogue is meaningful and highly effective.” There are a significant number of pupils who are from different sides of the learning continuum. Using learning resources will encapsulate the essence of the topic to students (Newman *et al.*, 1989).

However, the child’s exposure to emotional environment may directly influence their holistic development and PSED growth. In this case, what is valued and what is valuable may impact children’s perspectives on self-esteem and life (Page, Claire and Nutbrown, 2013). If children are being praised for writing their individual names successfully, but receive a short comment on their painting, then they will make this preconceived idea that their writing is ‘valuable’ but their paintings are not.

Sustainable play-based learning environments:

Play encompasses most aspects of learning for young children, such as developing problem-solving, language acquisition, and analytical thinking skills. For some practitioners, play pedagogy has a direct impact on the upbringing of the children’s holistic development, both in, and beyond the school community. Parents work alongside with their children, telling stories, enabling dialogue, and teaching them important life skills in their play-based activities (UNICEF, 2018, cited by play, 2022).

In Donaldson’s report (2015), he has argued that practitioners must employ a wide range of strategies required to develop students' creativity, self-esteem and critical thinking skills. For example, children should be provided with the opportunity to play in their outdoor learning environment, and to strongly resonate and deeply connect with

the natural world. They can explore concepts of sustainability and develop their own motor skills independently and confidently (Welsh Government, 2022).

The practitioner must ensure that children experiment with resources in their outdoor learning environment, and to make dynamic connections between it in the Welsh curriculum (Donaldson, 2015). In this case, the children might integrate new learning ideas into their schemas, such as climbing, muddy kitchen, toddler activity sheds, playing with sticks and building dens, to “adjust their own current thinking to accommodate these new experiences” (Welsh Government, 2022).

One of the most compelling examples of sustainable play-based learning materials are blocks. Play-blocks act as a mechanism for developing children’s holistic development and physiological needs (Gura, 1992; Hansel, 2016). Blocks provide children with the opportunity to develop basic mathematical skills, and to work independently in their own space and time. Their hand and eye co-ordination also strengthens, allowing them to develop their fine and gross motor skills.

Supporting children’s transitions in school and at home:

One of the greatest challenges in the Early Years Foundation Stage is transitioning (Ghaye and Pascal, 1998; Meggitt, 2003). The transitions from one setting to another is difficult for parents of those children and young people (CYP) who are neurodiverse, special education needs, and are experiencing mental health issues, such as anxiety, or obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) (Waterhouse, 2024). It is difficult to maintain systematic progress and efforts in a learning-based environment.

Home visits play an important role in uncovering the problems that children are facing in their own family environment (Greenfield 2012). The practitioner has an intimate knowledge of children’s wellbeing and safety, and where possible, tries to address the issues meaningfully and confidently with parents. This is in close alignment with Bronfenbrenner’s theory (Sadownik, 2023), in which the cultural context of the child (microsystem) affects their holistic development and self-esteem.

According to Brooker (2008), the practitioner has a responsibility to ensure that each child is feeling the same and welcomed in their learning environment; as healthy, confident, young individuals. It is crucial for the child to be exposed to a wide range of activities; in ensuring that they interact meaningfully with their peers and to enhance their own self-esteem. They must have the opportunity to exercise their choices, when making decisions for their physical needs.

In recent years, the Te Whāriki guideline has called for parents and families to play a leading role in the construction of the Early Years Curriculum, alongside with the professional (Linda *et al.*, 2013). They must be equipped with the set skills, resources, and knowledge required to navigate change in the future world. This 'woven mat' acts as a framework for students to thrive as confident young people, ready to make successful transitions in their lives and future learning.

Conclusion:

In summary, "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs" has a wide range of applications in the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is the practitioner's responsibility to ensure that students' physiological and safety needs are met, in ensuring that they thrive successfully in their own academic spheres. It would also create an environment that is conducive to success and lifelong learning.

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