

Module: ECEY4001

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Component 1 – Briefing Paper

Component 2 – Concept of Holistic Child Development

Component 3 – Three examples from Early Years Practice

AI Statement

I acknowledge the use of Google Scholar (Available at: <https://scholar.google.co.uk/>) for the purpose of my work in relation to Module 3 – Human Development (ECEY4001).

1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
2. Mary Ainsworth – Attachment
3. John Bowlby – Attachment Theory
4. Erik Erikson – Self Esteem / Identity
5. Montessori – Environment

Component 1.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs – Briefing Paper

	What does this mean? Why is it important?
Physical/Physiological Needs	Weinberg (2012) states that as part of human life humans all have a set of basic needs that need to be met: air, food, water, shelter, and sleep. Maslow's hierarchy suggests once all these have been met at the base of the pyramid, humans can then begin new motivations to move up to the next level. Weinberg (2012) also recognises that in places where poverty and basic needs are limited human motivation becomes solely focussed on those needs and they cannot reach self-actualisation. Maslow as cited by Stoyanov (2017) believed the base layer to the hierarchy of human motivation was ultimately the things humans need to survive. Maslow (1943) also states that a person who is deprived in food, safety, love and esteem would most likely hunger food over everything else. This is essential because it emphasizes the importance of having basic needs met adequately to enable humans to begin their journey to self-actualisation, without these humans simply cannot grow and develop.
Safety and Security Needs	As cited by Bland and DeRobertis (2017), Maslow (1987) defined the second tier of the pyramid as security, stability, dependency and protection. Abdelsayed (2018) states that safety and security is a primal need and without these humans are unable to focus on anything else. She recognises there are different types of safety. Physical safety referring to our bodies being safe and emotional safety referring to being around people we can trust. Gaining safety from those around us, Howe and Betts (2023) recognise Bowlby's idea of attachment being part of the safety system for children. Safety for infants comes in the form of caregivers, when infants' safety or security is threatened their attachment system is activated with the goal that caregivers restore safety and security with comfort. This is important because when children feel safe and secure, they can learn and develop through exploration beyond their immediate caregivers, this opens up wider context learning.
Love and Belonging Needs	Nurhasanah et al (2023) highlight that love and belonging needs are related to human as social beings who need relationships with others. Whether that be in partnership or as part of groups in the form of families and the wider community. Brodie (2025) highlights Bowlby's belief that emotional security depended on attachment style with caregivers. Bowlby emphasized that securely attached relationships for children fostered confidence and resilience, whereas unsecure attachments can lead to children finding emotional regulation and relationships hard. Furthermore, Bodrova and Leong (2007) highlight Vygotsky belief that caregivers supported the development of emotional interactions by responding to children appropriately as they grow and develop. They also stipulate Vygotsky's idea that positive attachments between children and adults are a key in child development because adults often hold the tools children need and will use later in life. This element of the pyramid is important because it enhances emotional wellbeing and regulation reducing the likelihood of anxiety, depression and mental health problems. When children feel loved accepted, and they belong they are more likely to pursue personal growth and self-actualisation.
Self- Esteem	As cited by Taormina and Gao (2013) Maslow recognises esteem in two categories, one being esteem for oneself and the other being the respect received by other people. Rogers et al (1995) stipulate that by giving children a sense of unconditional positive regard, value and understanding it fosters respect and confidence. Rogers (1959) as cited by Brodie (n.d) recognised the importance of having a high set of perceptions and esteem about yourself as vital for wellbeing and growth. Department of Education (2022) recognises children are motivated to belong in a range of context from families, schools and wider communities. Practitioners can support this by celebrating diversity and adopting child centred practice where children are valued and understood. Cunningham (2024) states that children who are confident and secure are more motivated to strive for growth. Maree (2021) highlights Erik Erikson's contribution to children's identity development and the believed this was vital in childhood, he believed children needed to be encouraged and supported to become independent, confident and secure to be able to survive and reach the purpose stage.
Self- Actualization	Maslow described self-actualization as "people's desire for self-fulfilment" (Taormina and Gao, 2013, p.159). According to Malows self-actualization is the ability to become the best version of yourself and is the highest tier in the pyramid. Maslow believe few people could reach this tier due to being unable to fulfil the other four tiers successfully (Vinney, 2024).

*(I have pasted the contents of the briefing paper below due to it being very small) *

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protection. Abdelsayed (2018) states that safety and security is a primal need and without these humans are unable to focus on anything else. She recognises there are different types of safety. Physical safety referring to our bodies being safe and emotional safety referring to being around people we can trust. Gaining safety from those around us, Howe and Betts (2023) highlight Bowlby's theory of attachment as being part of the safety system for children. Safety for infants comes in the form of caregivers, when infants' safety or security is threatened their attachment system is activated with the goal that caregivers restore safety and security with comfort. This is important because when children feel safe and secure, they can learn and develop through exploration beyond their immediate caregivers, this opens wider context learning and highlights safety and security as more than just the physical environment.

Love and Belonging – Nurhasanah *et al* (2023) highlight that love and belonging needs are related to human as social beings who need relationships with others. Whether that be in partnership or as part of groups in the form of families and the wider community. Brodie (2025) highlights Bowlby's belief that emotional security depended on attachment style with caregivers. Bowlby emphasized that securely attached relationships for children fostered confidence and resilience, whereas unsecure attachments can lead to children finding emotional regulation and relationships hard. Furthermore, Bodrova and Leong (2007) highlight Vygotsky belief that caregivers supported the development of emotional interactions by responding to children appropriately as they grow and develop. They also stipulate Vygotsky's idea that positive attachments between children and adults in a broader context are a key in child development because adults often hold the tools children need and will use later in life. This element of the pyramid is important because it enhances emotional wellbeing and regulation reducing the likelihood of anxiety, depression and mental health problems. When children feel loved accepted, and they belong they are more likely to pursue personal growth and self-actualisation.

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Self-Actualization –Maslow described self-actualization as “people's desire for self-fulfilment” (Taormina and Gao, 2013, p.159). According to Maslow's self-actualization is the ability to become the best version of yourself and is the highest tier in the pyramid. Maslow believe few people could reach this tier due to being unable to fulfil the other four tiers successfully (Vinney, 2024).

Component 2.

A discussion on the concept of holistic development and what this means in relation to Maslow's hierarchy of need for relationships, safety and security and self-esteem.

Maslow's Hierarchy of needs is often represented as a triangle made up of five levels of need, physiological needs, safety and security, love and belonging, self-esteem and self-actualisation, each need vital to understanding human motivation (Denys, 2025). This model suggests that human needs can be categorized and happen in stages until we reach the top level. Mukherji and Dryden (2014) states traditionally many theorists viewed child development as occurring in stages for example Piaget and Freud both of whom believed certain behaviours and interactions indicated a developmental stage for children linked to age. This would support Maslow's idea that human needs and motivations also happen through stages and that the bottom tier need to be fulfilled first before children can move up the pyramid. However, Froebel Trust (n.d) emphasizes Froebel's belief that children are whole beings and learn holistically rather than compartmentalisation of development and that learning is all linked a term he calls unity and connectedness. David *et al* (2003) as cited by

Brodie (2018) also shares a similar idea that children's learning and development was interwoven and happens at many levels and suggests emotional and social development form the foundations for other areas of development to grow. This can be linked to Te Whāriki approach and the view of child development as a woven mat with each strand overlapping. Further to this Brodie (2018) stipulates the term holistic as viewing something whole rather than as individual or separate parts. She emphasizes children's learning, development and growth are interconnected and all happen together. Additionally, Lindon (2012) highlights that to children holistic development is easy and all aspects of their being work together to create meaningful connections. The World Health Organisation (WHO) (2016) highlights that research indicates a child's brain develops rapidly in the first few years of life and this is also a vital period in which lack of nutrients, stimulation and protection can have damaging consequences for children. This suggest that as parents and practitioners the first few years of children's lives are a vital time for investing in all areas of child development and layers of Maslow's hierarchy to lay the foundations for positive lifelong outcomes for our future generations.

To understand the concept of holistic development it is important to consider positive relationships and the impact they have on children. According to Guy-Evans (2024) child development theorist Bronfenbrenner views child development as a complex system of relationships that are connected and overlap. Bronfenbrenner highlights Ecological systems that worked together to support children and their development. He places the child at the centre of the systems and how each system interacts and work together as a crucial influence on children's growth and development through raised self-esteem and sense of value. This suggest that relationships, interactions and different environments around the child from the immediate family to childcare settings, to the wider community influence emotional and social development for children. It also supports the idea that children develop holistically rather than in stages as children are influenced by the different contexts around them. The idea of relationships playing a role in supporting children's development links into Bowlby's attachment theory and in particular parent to child relationships. Lindon (2012) emphasizes Bowlby's theory about secure attachment being a vital foundation for healthy development in young children. Highlighting consistent nurturing and warm environments support children's resilience and wellbeing. She highlights children

who do not experience nurture and warmth and who are exposed to high levels of cortisol will have a hindered ability to learn due to lack of comfort and soothing. Circle of Security International (n.d) also recognises Bowlby as being the father of attachment and the importance of promoting secure attachment with children to lay the foundations of being able to successfully interact with others, to build and maintain relationships and effectively resolve conflicts for positive wellbeing. Further to this, Froebel Trust (n.d) acknowledges relationships as one of Froebel's key principles and central to children's lives. This is also echoed by Vygotsky who also placed significance importance on the role of adult relationships and social interactions in promoting positive child development. Additional to this is understanding safety and security as part of holistic development. Carter (2023) recognises Montessori belief that safety and security encompasses providing a physically safe environment that is prepared, has a sense of order and appropriate space for children to explore and discover with ample opportunities for independence and appropriate challenge. However, Ainsworth's Attachment theory alongside Bowlby tells us safety and security are also intrinsically linked to the positive relationship's children require for emotional safety and security that enables children to be able to venture into the wider world to build on experiences and opportunities for further learning because they have development a safe base (The Attachment Project, 2020). This is also linked to self-esteem needs and Erikson's model of developing an identity, children can only do this when they have a safe secure base feel valued, loved and accepted can engaged and interaction with the learning environments and supported by scaffolding can begin to learn, develop and strive for their full potential (McLeod (2024). This discussion highlights that Maslow Hierarchy gives a valuable framework of needs children require to be successful, well rounded and confident adults. However, it does suggest that rather than a hierarchy of set stages, it happens holistically and as a whole, each layer weaving into the next.

Component 3

A discussion on Maslow's significance in understanding child development and how this has influenced early years practice in three areas by understanding the importance of basic needs, creating a safe and stable environment and building confidence and independence.

Firstly, Brodie (2025) recognises Maslow's hierarchy of needs as an asset to Early years education today due to its insights into children's needs, behaviour, learning and most importantly to our understanding of human motivation and development. It emphasizes the importance of fostering effective environments and providing necessities to support holistic development for young children. Within early years practice professionals understand the importance of meeting physiological needs for survival due to having legislation and policies that provide a framework to address and protect this need. The United Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) Article six recognises a child's right to life, survival and development.

50minutes.com (2015) emphasize that according to Maslow, human physiological needs form the base of the pyramid and are essential for human survival therefore are the most important needs that must be fulfilled as without these learning and development can be significantly affected (Grantham-Mcgregor *et al* 2017).

Additionally, UNICEF (2021) highlights that the first one thousand days are a crucial time for children to be accessing the right types of food sources to support healthy growth and development to reach their full potential. Furthermore, the World Health Organization as cited by UNICEF (2021) emphasizes the importance of breastfeeding from birth to two years for a nutritious start, boosting brain development and giving children the foundations to thrive. Likhar and Patil (2022) also emphasize the importance of quality nutrition in the first one thousand days of life, and state that various areas of child development and learning is impacted positively when children have access to quality nutrition. Public Health Wales (2023) has recognised the importance of meeting physical/physiological needs in practice by developing several programmes such as, Working Together for a Healthier Wales that encouraging a range of services to come together to support early intervention and strategies to provide a healthier future for the children of Wales. There are also several smaller schemes and initiatives that help support early year provisions to meet children's basic needs giving them a good head start within early year's

settings. For example, Welsh Government (2023) rolled out flying start programmes to help support the most disadvantaged families and give them access to quality nutrition and support to promote children's right to for the best start in life. Furthermore, NHS Wales (n.d) alongside Welsh Government has developed The Healthy and Sustainable Pre-schools Scheme (HSPSS) that aims to support nurseries, playgroups and childminders in providing quality nutrition, safety and physical activity for the children they care for. NHS (2025) Healthy Start Scheme also helps disadvantaged families giving them access to fruit, vegetables and milk, as well as access to vitamins from pregnancy to aged four. Within the school context Welsh Government (2022) has given all primary school aged children free school meals to promote healthy eating and ensure no child goes hungry. Subsequently, modern day early years provision and practice is governed by legislations and policies that reflect and recognise the importance of meeting children's basic needs, raising the impact on learning and development (Mukherji and Dryden 2014). All these schemes of work and initiatives supported by legislation highlights the importance of those basic physiological needs for children in Maslow's base layer of the pyramid being a fundamental part of human survival. Welsh Government (2024) recognition and investment of providing good nutrition in the early years supports practice to meet basic needs for children within the vital window for children's development fostering the best outcomes for holistic development.

Secondly, within early years we understand the importance of creating a safe and stable environment. Maslow recognises safety and security as the second tier of the pyramid. Again, there is legislation and policies that place statutory duties and responsibilities on early years to safeguard the the welfare of children in their care. Under the UNRC (1989) Article nineteen stipulates that children must be kept safe and protected from harm. In early years practice we can also create safety and security for children within our provisions by providing supportive, nurturing and inclusive environments. Welsh Government (2022) through the funded non-maintained curriculum advocates settings to be providing enabling environments that are not only physically safe but enable children to explore, learn and develop safely through following their interests. By building positive relationships with children and families, practitioners gain emotional security and safety for children and when children feel loved, supported and valued they then have confidence to explore their

environment and access other learning opportunities (Care Learning, 2025). These learning opportunities will be accessed through play and Perry (2014) highlights play as having benefits for forging connections and enhancing brain development for children. Additionally, Tovey (2020) states that Froebel believe play was the highest form of child development as it enabled expression and connections to the wider world. Therefore, the importance of ensuring children's safety and security both physically and emotionally will empower them to access play experiences and opportunities that promote development in cognition, social, physical and emotional skills.

Finally, within early years we understand the importance of transitions and the impacts these have for children. According to Welsh Government (2022) children will experience different kinds of transitions during their early years. Vertical transitions that come from major changes such as moving house or joining a new nursery and horizontal transitions which are those smaller day to day transitions such as moving from rooms or activities and they both require children to learn skills to cope and adapt. Welsh Government (2017) recognise by the age of four children would have experienced several transitional changes over a range of contexts from health care changes, childcare arrangements/providers, and as just as adults, children can find these transitions stressful impacting wellbeing and their ability to engage with learning and interactions. Welsh Government (2022) stresses the importance of managing these transitions for children carefully to limit any negative experience that can have long term consequences for children. In practice today it is encouraged to engage in person centred practice where all stakeholders involved with children work together developing effective working relationships, sharing information and opens communication dialogue that has the child at the centre of This highlights the importance of professional partnership working and effective communications with the child at the centre. Much like Bronfenbrenner's theory where all the microsystem interacts together working for the best outcomes for the child.

In conclusion Maslow is significant to Early Years practice today because according to Brodie (2025) he gave us a framework of knowledge about the many factors that influence children growth and development and broadens perspectives to the emotional, social and physical wellbeing aspects that influence children's

development and highlights holistic practice as key to achieving positive outcome and lifelong wellbeing.

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