

Blog 1: A successful childhood.

Does our childhood define whom we become?

Childhood is a much contested concept (Prout, 2005 ,p2.) (Kehily, 2005 ,p1.). The age range also is much debated (Cunningham, 2006, p14).

There is often much emphasis on the importance of childhood and early development (Kehily, 2005), this is often widely accepted, although there are times where consideration of why it's important is overlooked. These important years are said to influence the course of a child's life (Parker- Rees & Leeson, 2015, p.26)(Department of Education and Training, 2017).

The well-known African proverb states 'It takes a village to raise a child'. Whether or not you agree with this, it speaks of what's involved in raising a child. From the moment parents announce the expecting growth of their family, the community is involved from wider family aspects to health professionals. Frequently in this modern era the announcements are made via social media and the joy is spread vastly among acquaintances and unfamiliar 'friends'. Have we moved into a new digital village? Although an interesting idea, it's not going to be the theme of this blog, however a seed in which I want readers to consider throughout.

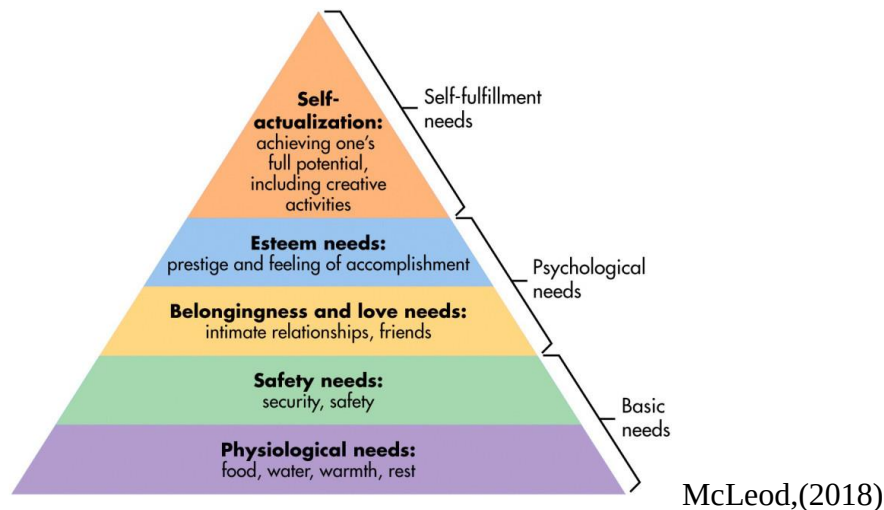
Childhood is a period of time in a persons life which is unavoidable, however the experiences of our childhood and academic achievement differs in regards to our social and cultural status (Goodman and Gregg, 2010). The childhood experience also has some influence to whom we are brought up around such as the 'parents' or the village per say(Beckett and Taylor, 2016, p190).

Hammond (2017) states 'The primary purpose of parenting is to raise fully functional adults who can take care of themselves and make a positive contribution to society' (Hammond,2017). Yet During the Education Reform Summit 2015, Minister Nick Gibb, Stated that 'Education is the engine of our economy, it is the foundation of our culture, and it's an essential preparation for adult life'(Gibb,2015). Does education and parenting aim for the same thing? Contribute to society, is this what success is?

From such as young age children are expected to be in full time education by the age of 5,

Malsow suggested that as long as a person's basic needs are fulfilled at the bottom, only then can an individual work their way up and be able to reach self-actualisation. However Maslow's model does not state the need for education. Although we put a lot of emphasis on it as a society.

Fig 1.

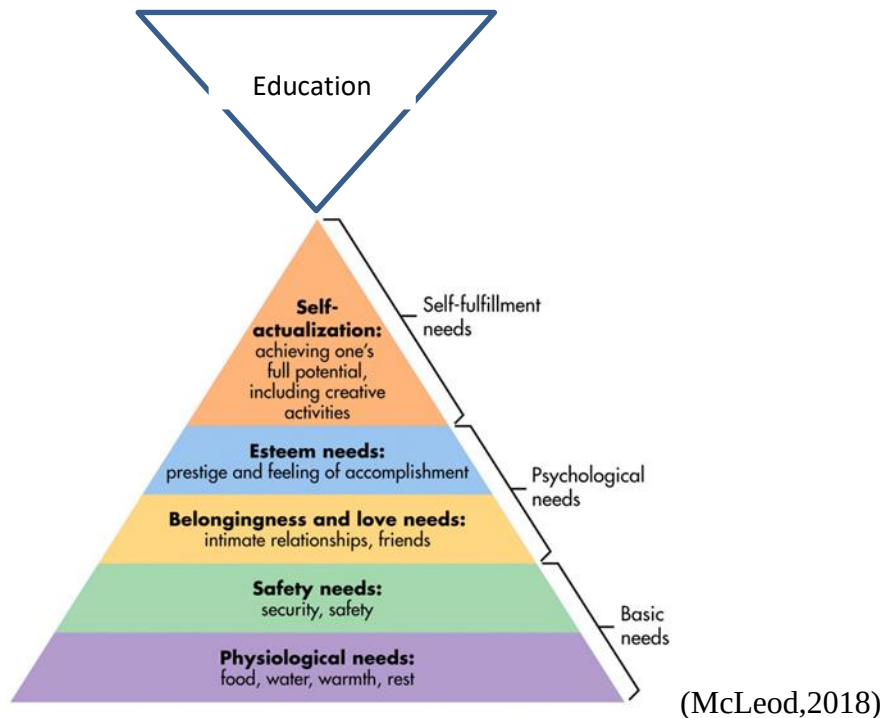


My question to you as the reader is are we using education to feed into these needs and fulfil them? Think of education in the broadest sense, from the moment a baby is born it's learning (Beckett and Taylor, 2016, p20). Learning continues throughout the life course, feeding into fulfilling Malsows hierarchy of needs. "...learning changes a person from within, enabling psychological health and growth towards the actualization of their human development" (DeCarvalho, 1991, p95).

Should we be viewing Education, learning and Malsow's hierarchy of needs as an hourglass, filtering information downwards to fulfil our needs (FIG 2). There is much guidance on parenting to provide, the physiological and safety needs as a responsibility (Hilderbrand, 2005).

DeCarvalho (1991) discusses many links between Maslow's and Rogers theories and the link between those and Education and argues that the curriculum and technological changes are adjusting how we teach, and in turn has limitations in personal growth through education.

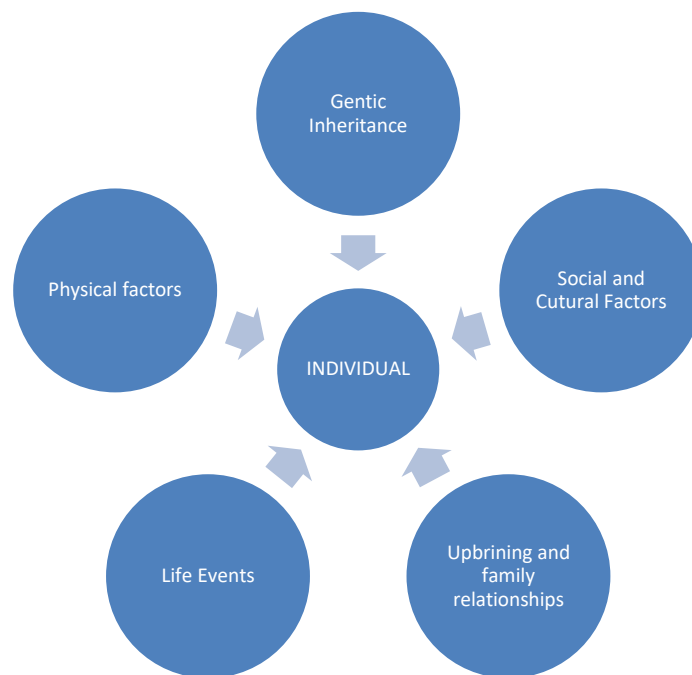
Fig 2.



It would be naive to think that there is only one key indicator for success as it's subjective and individualised (Able-Brehm,2014 in Keller et al.2014). There needs to be much further consideration to the subject of does childhood define whom we are? When does childhood begin and finish? What about the psychological brain development during adolescence and how much does this play apart of an individual reaching success. There is the long aged argument of nature vs nurture (Beckett and Taylor, 2016, p6-7).

As a student and being one of the main care givers to my younger siblings, the factors in which determine success in my opinion are vast and wide and interlink with one another. What defines an Individual can not be purely put down to an individual factor such as parenting or genetics however co-exist as wider influences. I have attempted to map these out (Fig.3) with the acknowledgement of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems and the model provided by Beckett and Taylor (2016,p17). Throughout literature and studies there is great amounts of information available in the regards to how influences interlink with one another, an example of this is that of Gerhardt (2014) and that of Zak (2012) whom studied the effects of cortisol and oxytocin and levels of these hormones and how they are essential within childhood which are also altered within experiences in childhood, which then have a later effect in life.

Fig 3.



Throughout my practice I have often felt that education, health and wellbeing is almost like constructing a home. Childhood being the foundation while adolescence an opportunity to test the boundaries, the foundations and allow for strength and repair to take place before the continuation of the house. The house may never get completed finished like a person may never reach self-actualisation as cracks and gaps are consistently found the repair work never gets completed. If we considered our life course like this a bit more, we would probably invest a lot more into our children and young people education, health and wellbeing knowing that's what will set them for the future.

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Blog 2 – Consumerism leading Parenting?

In my previous blog I questioned myself about the role of childhood and whether this defines our success. I concluded with the understanding that it was a multitude of influences; this blog shall look into the role of consumerism.

Throughout our lectures we have explored the nature of childhood, we have also looked at how the view of childhood has changed over the years (Prout, 2005 ,p2. Kehily, 2005 ,p1).

Consumerism has huge significance within the global economy (Jain, 2015,p1). However we also need to consider the broader sense of what consumerism is and what affect, if any to our children and young people and in particular their health and wellbeing. Often we discuss that as a society we consistently want more and never are satisfied, stuck on a hedonic treadmill. Although some would argue that this is a relatively modern problem (Proud,2014), this isn't a new phenomenon and started in the 18th Century with the introduction of shopping desire to demonstrate wealth (White, 2014, Online). There seems to be a product or service for your every desire or will.

The way we parent has also change with the introduction of technology (Taylor,2013,Online), and also has a huge influence on how we consume. Parents are bombarded with information and what is 'best' for their child with clever advertising and marketing such as 'educational' and 'healthy' tags attached to products (Palmer, 2007, p228). Changes in family dynamics now also mean that children play a 'quintessential role in purchasing household products' (Lenka and Vandana, 2015, p868). Prout (2005) suggests that social, economic, cultural and technological change in modern society has weakened the boundary between childhood and adulthood. However another perspective could be that the way we parent has weakened the boundary between childhood and adulthood, parents are using technology as a replacement of ensuring child safety and wellbeing, by putting a screen in front of them to know that they are occupied, exposing children to the unknown content with the possibility of it being 'adult' targeted.

Parenting and consumerism is also leading to competitiveness in what we can provide for our children. This is also having a knock on effect on our Children and Young people's health and wellbeing. Children whom are reporting high/very high life satisfaction has continued to drop since 2014 (Office for National Statistics, 2018, online) The Varkey foundation found that

money was the main cause of anxiety in life for young people (2017, p34). Why should money make such a huge influential impact on a child/young person when the majority of them have a good standard of living (Cribb, Keiller and Waters, 2018 p9-19)

In the UK there have been steps to reduce the amount of advertising aimed at children with the overall aim to improve the health and wellbeing, such as banning junk food advertising in 2007. Regardless of this there is still increases in childhood obesity (House of Commons Care Committee, 2018). There needs to be much more consideration on the advertising and marketing of products and the impact they have on parents/adults whom ultimately have responsibility for their children. Living busy life's and high expectations seek the need for ease and convenience to save time. A product which everyone would like is time and if a product or service can do it for us why not?

The five ways to wellbeing suggests that we need to be more active and that connecting with others is equally important. With children and young people spending a large amount of time on screens (Ofcom, 2018), allows companies the continuous opportunities to advertise. Consumerism is necessarily leading our life's, making us unhappy with the stuff we have and the stuff we want, while also limiting ourselves the amount of time we actually connect with others in a meaningful way.

In recent weeks there has been much publicity over social media over the 'Momo' model that is accused of grooming and intimidating children to undertake acts of harmful behaviour. However there has been also much debate in regards to whether this story is genuine (BBC Newsnight, 2018, Online). Causing anxiety and panic across society. A perspective that could be taken is this, a clever way of 'consumerising' communities and society to change parenting, by watching and 'parent' our children, rather than using a material comfort and distractions of parental inconvenience (Lenka and Vandana, 2015, p 868). With the overall affect to improve the health and wellbeing of our children, 'the quality of relationships has a very significant impact on our sense of personal well-being and children are no exception' (Snape, 2018, Online).

Should we be taking a more rounded approach to marketing and the link between health and wellbeing of our children and young people, such as Sweden whom have banned TV marketing to children under 12 (Palmer, 2007, p230). Within the UK there has been developments within this such as the cease of advertising of smoking and fast food. Although as a country we still bombard our children and young people with large amounts of marketing. When Prout suggests

that to raise children with a healthy development in body and mind children need love, stability and attention (2007,p135), this should be our main focus showing love, stability and attention without feeling the need to 'spoil with consumerism'.

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BLOG 3

Protectiveness good or damaging to Children?

What about the children? Think of the children! Statements which are often meant in good term and to protect the innocence and qualities of childhood.

Parental rules, Watershed TV, age restrictions on social media, limitations on advertising and a set curriculum, even age restrictions in parks? All with the aim to protect the children? The report by UNICEF ‘the state of the worlds children 2000’ has the opening foreword containing this statement...

‘There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected that their lives are free from fear and want and that they can grow up in peace’ (Annan,2000).

My question to you at the moment is that can we raise children that are free of fear, with their welfare protected and their rights upheld and respected? I feel although not a parent myself but a much older sibling this is a challenge. What do we ultimately want to protect our children from?

As we know that the role and view of childhood has changed over time. Historically children were seen as a member of the workforce a contribution to society, and father being the matriarch of the family (Stearns,2005). Childhood is now much more seen as a protected, idealised and a precious time of an individual’s life (Lowe,2013). Childhood is also much more negotiated between the parent, society and the child and is fairly subjective. (Lansdown, 2002, p. 33-34).

Its understandable to want to protect children from harm and keep them safe. It’s also a stated in UNCRC Article 19 (United Nations,1989). Protectiveness describes the parent restrictions and supervision designed to shield children from adverse outcomes. There has been recent dialogue in the media around ‘Snow plough’ parenting and ‘helicopter’ parenting where barriers are removed and consistent observation of their child actions, to ensure that they succeed to parents expectations (Miller and Bromwich, 2019). There is much caution needed in this approach as an unintended consequence of this can be naiveté (Eltringham and Aldridge, 2002).

Over protectiveness in low risk environments can cause a number of adverse outcomes beyond naivete such as higher risk taking behaviours, or even over analysis of risk (Ungar, 2009). Over protective behaviour can also reduce the resilience of the individual and the family (Ungar,2009,p262)

There is much discourse around building and teaching resilience to our children and young people, (Chatterjee,2019; Alvord and Grados 2005; NCH The Bridge Care Development Service,2007) The oxford dictionary defines resilience as ‘the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness’ (Oxford Dictionary, No date).

If we protect our children and young people ‘too’ much, will they experience manageable adversity and learn to develop resilience, however what is the best amount of protectiveness and what’s too little and too much. This is obviously hard to measure and is subjective to the individual and families. As identified within research around ACEs documents, resilience is also built around trust and engagement with wider sociological opportunities.

‘Developing resilience through access to a trusted adult in childhood, supportive friends and being engaged in community activities, such as sports, reduced the risks of developing mental illness’ (NHS,2018)

There is much needed conversation which needs to be developed in regards to supporting the health and wellbeing of our children and young people and the sustainability of this for the future. We cannot allow our children and young people to go play football in the road such as we have done historically, due to changes to our infrastructure and society. However we do need young people to believe in themselves, that they can be trusted and allow them to engage within society appropriately. Throughout the lectures and completing these blogs, we often write about issues and problems and focus on the negatives of these issues. However we need to think more about positive developments in regards to Children and Young people and me myself feel that the a level of independence can support the development of children and young people and in hand their health and wellbeing.

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