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Contents:

Component 1: The Hierarchy of needs. Word count 1017 (p2)

Component 2: Holistic Child development. Word count 1013 (p3-5)

Component 3: Maslow's Significance in understanding child development.

Word count 1094 (p6-8)

Reference lists: Reference list: The Hierarchy of needs. (p9)

Reference list: Holistic Child development. (p10)

Reference list: Maslow's Significance in understanding child development. (p11-12)

The Hierarchy of needs.

The creator of the 'hierarchy of needs' was a psychologist from New York called Abraham Maslow. After experiencing trauma throughout his younger years, he was intrigued in the qualities humans portrayed. Throughout Maslow's studies, he recognized that humans have stages of requirements in life some of more importance than others to sustain an adequate life. Maslow broke these down into five stages the psychological, safety, social, esteem and self- actualization. Another psychologist Douglas McGregor, then created a triangle image highlighting these stages to demonstrate the importance of each one. This theory has scaffolded the research undertaken on human behaviour over the years (Stoyanov, 2017, pp9-14).



Self- actualization: Perera (2024) answers the question on the meaning of self-actualization as an notion of psychology that describes someone who is "*best version of oneself*". According to Poston (2009, p6) Maslow singled out self-actualization as a section that belonged alone within the pyramid of needs. He did this as this is the highest point and the feeling of accomplishment is met. Maslow believed that once the prior needs have been met to some efficient standard, the attention diverts to individuals interests in life. Weinberg (2011) supports this research by stating people who reach this stage feel a sense of achievement, become confident individuals that feel grateful for experiences.

Esteem: Maslow believed that there were two different versions of the word esteem, one was regarding the individual and the other to how that individual gained acknowledgment from others according to Taorimina and Gao (2013, p4). Supporting this research is Poston (2009, p5), who writes about Maslow definition of the word esteem into a higher and lower ranking. Defining a lower level as someone who thrives on the respect they gain from others and how they are perceived. To the higher who has more confidence within themselves and sence of achievement. Holzknrecht (2007) defines the characteristics to what esteem may look like, talking about having the determination, capable individuals, socially competent. However also noting that if a person is suffering from depression, it is hard for them to progress further. This is supported by Weinburg (2011), who writes without esteem and admiration from others can leave individuals feeling futile.



Love and belonging: Feeling the sense of belonging and love can come in many forms, Holzknrecht (2007) explains from Maslow's theory, that feeling accepted by others, making connections and cared for whether within a group or by a person. Taormina and Gao (2013 p4) also note that Maslow believed that once people physiological and safety needs are met, they have more focus to build these connections with others. However, Baumeister, Leary and Steinberg (1995, p1) highlight that the lack in connections with others could result in a number well-being issues. Bowen (2021) emphasis how forming relationships are crucial to human development, especially within infants who form a bond within the womb. Bowen continues to discuss how positive relationships between infant and care giver can instantly allow the infant to feel safe, which supports the basic hierarchy of needs.



Safety: Weinberg (2011) emphasis that Maslow believed the need to feel secure can be just as important as the physiological stages. As if someone feels insecure or at risk this can stop them from progressing through the next stages. A good example of this is written by Pichere (2015, p5) who's research into Maslow suggest that it is not only about people feeling physically safe, however the security of their items. Having the security that your items are safe from damage and theft, helps their mindset. Pichere writes people like "*familiarity*" and begin to feel insecure when faced with the "*Unknown*". Supporting this is Poston (2009, p4) who also researched Maslow's theory, stating some people live without safety and security due to their environment, which prevents them from moving through the stages and progression in life due to financial, economic struggles. Whereas a person who has security feels comfortable within their environment so can focus on progression.

Physiological: Weinberg (2011) explains Maslow's theory on the physiological stage, as being the basic needs of life. Weinberg highlights that having access to oxygen, water, food, shelter and health is the key to human survival. Supporting Weinberg's research is Taorimina and Gao (2013, p2-3) who state the definition of a need is something that is required to survive. However, the lack of an essential source such as oxygen, will then make a human "*need*" the oxygen. So, the oxygen is not the need itself but the feeling of deprivation that creates the need for survival. Holzknrecht (2007) discusses how even though the physiological stage is placed at the bottom of the triangle, it does not reflect its priority, in fact it's the fundamental part as the more deprived a species is, from their key essentials of survival, the more their behaviour or character changes. The deprivation of one of these key essential's changes behaviour, it becomes a fight to survive and any means necessary to access that essential source. Weinberg (2011) explains that Maslow's theory was based on progression, once a need was met then the need for something else becomes more paramount, creating the next stage of the Hierarchy of needs.

Summary: After looking into the five stages of Maslow's Hierarchy of needs, Holzknrecht (2007), concludes the importance of people recognizing these needs within oneself. To look after our-selves to work on them to eventually find personal fulfillment and reach self-actualization. However, these stages may not occur in a set sequence, Poston (2009), highlights that many researchers have identified that some people can fluctuate up and down the stages depending on circumstances and cultural backgrounds. Some cultures may place belonging over safety or individuals who have a positive start in their early stages of life may progress further through these stages than others. This was evident during the covid-19 epidemic which Dwivedi and Badge (2021), display a few studies on how people in the first world countries pre covid, thought more of their social needs, whereas during covid this turned and regressed back to people wanting safety and worrying about their basic needs.

Holistic Child development.

Let us begin by defining the word 'holistic'. According to Cambridge Dictionary (2024), holistic is looking at something as a whole and not sections. This relates to discussions, objects and people. Discussing this further was Weinberg (2011), who's studies into theorists Abraham Maslow and Maria Montessori showed how Maslow and Montessori began looking at people in a 'whole' new way. This then was enhanced by Maslow, who believed people have different levels of needs, which accumulate throughout people's lives to become a 'whole adult' or as Maslow renamed it a 'self-actualized individual'. Central to this information and to collaborate our findings, this paper will investigate the development of a child as a whole, their Holistic development to achieve self-actualization.

One of the most important things to consider within this research of holistic development within children is that all areas of learning and care are connected to create a holistic approach (Brodie, 2018, p2). Brodie discusses that babies and children do not learn things in sections at a time but are all 'concurrent' and happen at once. However, even though some of these skills will develop simultaneously, if there is a delay in one of the developmental areas this may affect another. Mukherji and Dryden (2014, p84), support this holistic approach in learning, rather than seeing emotional, social development as separate stages, in daily life all developmental areas are connected. Later Mukherji and Dryden (p226) continue to show how an environment promotes this holistic development by providing opportunities for children to explore their own interest, freedom to play which facilitates the learning as well as trained staff. Within the UK and other places in Europe, there is a new pedagogy which is moving towards a Holistic perspective in learning. Following on from a legal framework introduced mainly in childhood setting, stating five key elements of care to help support all children from all backgrounds, to reach their full potential and support their well-being. These promote 'health, safety, enjoyment and encouragement to achieve goals, positive contributions and achieve economic well-being' (Harris, 2006). This coincides with Maslow's Hierarchy of needs, which Weinberg (2012) writes about Biological and physiological needs, access to food, water and air. To safety needs, ensuring shelter, security, moving towards love and belonging, having family support, friendships. Continuing with self-esteem and respect. To lastly becoming self-actualized or developing holistically, being well rounded individuals who are happy with their achievements.

Supporting these findings are theorists, who all discuss the importance of supporting the 'whole child's development. Montessori highlights that even though teaching academic skills is important, supporting children's health is also just as important. Montessori discusses health as psychological development and 'caring for the soul'. This includes direct and indirect ways, resources in an equipped environment and believes this starts from birth (Weinberg, 2012). Another theorist is Vygotsky, who's framework talked about four principles, "children's knowledge, social context,

learning leading to development and language being a central role in mental development.' Vygotsky suggested that development can influence learning but also work in reverse that learning can influence development. Vygotsky believed in providing an environment and information that is at the child's level, which will lead to further development (Bodrova, Leong, 2007, p32). Bronfenbrenner is another theorist who bases research on the child being the main focus and that the child's surroundings influence development. Bronfenbrenner discusses five key elements which surround a child's life. These are microsystems, people with direct contact and influence a child's daily life such as caregivers and school. Next the mesosystem based on the environment neighborhood, neighbors. Following on is the exosystem, the social effects like caregivers work schedules. Moving on to macrosystem, which focuses on legal frameworks or culture experiences to support the children's needs. Lastly the Chronosystem, bases on changes over time (Sadownik, 2023, p2/3). These all follow a similar structure to Maslow hierarchy of needs, highlighting there are a variety of needs children should experience, not only based on education but on the psychological needs to reach self-fulfillment. Providing enabling adults, environments and opportunities will support the child's holistic development.

However, if an element of need is not met how would this affect a child's holistic development. Gwaxula (2013), discusses how poverty, such as a lack of food or shelter, lack of communication and resources, as well as the financial strain are just some of the issues that could affect child progression. Even though Gwaxula discussion is based on Eastern Cape, the issues raised could link to any child. Gwaxula highlights that if a child's main focus is to find food, shelter the basic needs, this impacts progression, as their time is spent on surviving. Gwaxula then discusses the lack of communication or resources, if the child isn't given the opportunities to explore or experience different things, how will they know what is out there to progress further. Later in the discussion was the issue of finances, if a child's environment is struggling financially, this affects them emotionally as well as physically, stopping them from having resources to support progression. Green (2014) supports this by discussing how the environment can affect our behavior and mindset. Green talks about his personal journey, however the point put forward is that by having the right environment and people around you support progression. Bronfenbrenner highlights this by stating "Every child needs at least one adult who is irrationally crazy about them" (Sadownik, 2023, p86).

Many theorists have built a structure to support adults to empower children to their potential, similar to Maslow. However, according to Rojas, et al (2023), who is questioning that in today's society, is it effective. Rojas article especially considers the hierarchy of needs and discusses how the current economics in some countries demonstrates a wider gap between wealth brackets, and how the lower wealth in society will find it difficult to progress. Even though this links with Maslow, Rojas discusses how having more money doesn't always support your wellbeing, which questions its position in the hierarchy. Highlighting that the individual may fluctuate

between each of the needs, or even become self-actualized lower down the pyramid.

Maslow's significance in understanding child development.

Generally, today it is considered that Early Years Practices not only teach academic skills such as literacy and mathematics, but support children's emotional health, to help the overall holistic development. Weinberg (2011) writes about a psychologist named Abraham Maslow, who was the introduced the hierarchy of needs structure. This structure gave a basic idea of what humanity needs in order to become a "whole individual". It demonstrates the importance of basic needs like clean air, food and water, to security, love, esteem and by reaching each of the stages feeling a sense of fulfillment and reaching self- actualization. However, within our settings, for children missing or struggling with one of these stages, the readiness to learn may be affected. This discussion will highlight three different scenarios in which children in a setting may be experiencing a struggle and look at how practitioners support and the policies put place in order to support the "whole child."

Transitions:

The University of Cambridge dictionary (2024) defines transitions as something that changes. However, there are two types according to the Welsh government flying start guidance (2017), discussing the horizontal and vertical transitions. Horizontal focuses on the things that occur daily in a child's life, whereas vertical are the crucial changes in a child's life, like starting school. Child A is a 5-year-old girl, who is going through a vertical change, attending a school setting, the breakfast club, eating lunch in the hall amongst other older children, as well as playtimes on the yard and lastly attends an after-school club until collected at five pm. There are a lot of transitions throughout the day with different adults, different areas of the setting, different children and with different expectations. During each of these transitions' child A would become attached to the main adult either at drop off or the adult moving her from each transition, and for some of the time remain withdrawn from interacting with others. Although the child was not distressed, the lack of security she was experiencing was evident. Weinberg (2011) discusses how Maslow believed children feel safe in environments that are foreseeable and have routines. When a child is faced with unfamiliarity and feels insecure this becomes the immediate need and all that child's ambition is to meet that need, rather than engage in other activities preventing their progression to becoming self-actualized. To support practitioners, communicate with caregivers and staff, so all are aware of the days she attends extra out-of-school activities, this is reinforced throughout the day. Providing familiar staff and routines in each area helps A to regulate through familiar routines and relationships with staff. Also providing a visual timetable with pictures of each part of the day helps the child visually break down the day and understand what is next. These strategies link with the National minimum standards policy for Wales (2023), highlighting the basic standards an Early Years setting should provide, these include providing information and relationships with care givers, having routines and sufficient staff. Weinburg (2011) supports this by discussing Maslow's theory that

children generally feel secure when they know what to expect and have routines. If this is lacking in a child's lives then it becomes the dominant thought, which enables them to progress further.

Poverty:

Egan (2020) highlights within the first sentence of the article, how Wales has links to children from disadvantaged backgrounds achieving less in their academic studies than others from more advanced backgrounds. Child B is a 7-year-old girl in full-time school and receives free school meals. However, access to uniforms, funding for trips or even a snack is difficult. Even though B is a relatively happy child, it is evident that she is beginning to see the differences between herself and others, by equipment they have, the snack they have and at times adults have noticed her sneaking pencils in her bag. This is affecting her esteemed needs, as while others talk about their holidays, toys, she just listens. The Welsh Government (2024), have worked hard to implement strategies in order to close this gap, introducing the "Child Poverty Strategy". The strategy has implemented free school meals for all children within primary local authority schools, which has helped towards the stigma for having free meals. It also offers free breakfast clubs and has a "Schools essentials grant", to support low-income families with school uniforms other equipment for reception to year 11 children. As practitioners providing a uniform swap shop has helped, and providing funding for school trips or payment schemes has allowed B to feel included and build her self-esteem. Weinberg (2011) emphasizes a Montessori role in building esteem as "caring for the soul" and having "prepared environments" to help the children fulfill that need.

Attachment:

Thompson (2024, p18-43) discusses attachment develops between a caregiver when they understand and response to the child's needs sensitively, allowing the child to feel comfortable exploring knowing the adult would be there to support if required. However, when a caregiver does not meet the child's requirements in the same way this can create an insecure attachment, which results in changes in behavior and the child being more focused on engaging with the adult rather than exploring. Child C is a 6-year-old boy, who attends the full-time setting, and has good attachment with caregivers, however, struggles with leaving the caregiver at drop off. C would cling to caregiver, become upset and throughout the day would be disengaged and would stick with a member of staff at any opportunity he had to play. The Welsh Government (2021) introduced a framework based on whole-school approach to emotional well-being, highlighting creating a positive environment in schools by building relationships between caregivers, staff, wider communities as well as other professionals. By achieving this it strengthens the feeling of belonging, allowing children to build relationships with adults and peers. This is being implemented within the setting to support C. Creating social groups, involving him to play games and interact with others, providing group activities and games at

playtime. Bowlby (1982, p8) believes children building those attachments have effects at that present time and within the future, helping form the “whole child”.

Conclusion:

All of these scenarios demonstrate children struggling in an area of the hierarchy of needs struggle to progress as their attention is all to meet that need. Maslow’s theory over time has helped practitioners understand where to bridge these gaps and now have “child centered learning” and legislation like the Curriculum for Wales (2020), which introduce the four purposes reinforcing developing confident, ethical, creative and capable learners.

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