

Human Development Portfolio

2404314
ECEY4001
Word count

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1. Infographic.



2. Essay.

The concept of child development.

This essay will discuss the concepts of child development, what holistic development in the Early Years includes, and why it is important. This discussion will also include different theories and approaches towards child development, if they link with Maslow's theory and if any significant issues could affect the holistic approach. This essay will aim to understand the holistic concept of child development.

Holistic development is an approach used in the Early Years that nurtures children to thrive in every aspect of their childhood. Holistic development is to view the child as a whole person and encourages development in all areas of their lives. This includes socially, physically, spiritually, mentally and emotionally. (Teach Kloud, 2023) Similarly, All Hallow's School (2024) suggest that child development should include more than "learning the alphabet and counting numbers" and that it should consist of nurturing every aspect of growth so that the child can connect with the world more meaningfully.

All Hallow's School (2024) explains that applying a holistic approach to education encourages children to explore and discover their surroundings, promoting growth socially and emotionally.

Maria Montessori:

Issacs explanation of the Montessori theory supports this view by suggesting that if children are given a “developmentally appropriate” learning environment, they can teach themselves using things they believe are of interest (2012).

The Children’s Room (no date), an accredited Montessori nursery in Swansea, suggests that the Montessori method of teaching places a strong emphasis on encouraging a child’s curiosity and self-directed learning and that the Montessori method promotes self-reliance, experiential learning and growth of a love for learning. The Montessori approach at this nursery aims to lead young minds through an amazing world.

Criticising the Montessori method, Li (2024) points out that children do not have enough opportunities to practice teamwork, a crucial life skill. This is because self-sufficiency is a key concept of the Montessori method. She also points out that the lack of research on how well Montessori children can regulate their emotions is a concern because experiencing stress and learning from it is how emotional intelligence is developed. Li (2024) also highlights the cost issues of enrolment in Montessori schools. She argues that low-income families will find it difficult to enrol their children, as Montessori schools are typically in high-income areas, and that financial difficulties can arise if low-income families decide to enrol their children.

According to Weinberg (2011), the basis for addressing needs must come from a child's environment, which must contain tangible and intangible, concrete and abstract elements, as both Montessori and Maslow recognised. Weinberg suggests these are essential elements in a child’s personal growth and will be absorbed naturally, and that a child’s overall development needs should be met through experience in natural learning environments. This is according to Maslow’s psychology and is also reflected in the Montessori method.

Te Whariki:

Explaining the Te Whariki approach, TeahKloud (2023) explains that this approach was developed in the 1990s and has become a key principle in guiding Early Years care and education in New Zealand. Translated to English, Te Whariki means ‘woven mat’ and symbolises the interconnectedness and the holistic nature of development and learning in the Early Years.

Nicholls (2004) explains that the Te Whariki approach has four main principles that include holistic development, family and community, empowerment and relationships. These principles then include five areas of development and learning, which creates the framework to include every child. The five areas include:

- well-being, promoting good health, nurturing emotional well-being and being kept safe from harm.

- Contribution, where children are seen as individuals and can learn regardless of gender, ability, background and ethnicity.

- Communication, to be allowed to develop a range of communication skills, experience and learn about their own and other cultures, and to develop creativity and ways to be expressive.

Exploration, where play is valued and recognised as meaningful learning, to gain confidence and control of their bodies, and developing thinking and reasoning skills to make sense of the world.

Belonging, where children and families are allowed to connect with and make links to the wider world, to believe and understand that they have a place in the world and can recognise the boundaries and limits of acceptable behaviour. (Te Whariki, 1996, P.15).

Croner-I (2022) believes that the Te Whariki approach advocates creating a tailored, safe environment for children, that also values respect and diversity. Croner-I strongly believes that children are far more likely to excel in life when they feel secure and loved.

Blaiklock (2010) however, believes that since the Te Whariki is general and holistic, there is little guidance provided for teachers to design learning activities that work for particular subject areas, such as science, literature, maths, art and music.

Veazey (2020) argues that Te Whariki helps teachers understand what children are trying to achieve and what is possible, rather than assessing the learning development concerning predefined milestones.

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Te Whariki, safety, belonging and self-worth are basic needs that must be met before a child can reach their full potential. Their holistic approach to development considers social, cognitive, emotional, and physical development and places a strong emphasis on relationships, individuality, and empowerment. Both theories aim to empower children to flourish and realize their full potential by addressing these needs in ways that are inclusive, supportive, and culturally sensitive.

Findings by the Welsh Government (2024) suggest that poverty harms how a child can develop. Children who live in poverty are more likely to suffer from low birth weight, poor physical health and poor mental health. The Welsh Government explains evidence suggesting that poverty raises the risk of child abuse and neglect, which is in line with findings that substance abuse, poor mental health, domestic violence, and a higher risk of child harm are all associated with poverty.

UNICEF (No Date) believe that living in poverty as a child has detrimental effects. Lack of access to basic needs like food, housing, and education hinders children's physical and mental growth and lowers their social and economic opportunities as adults. Compared to their peers who don't live in poverty, children from the world's poorest households die twice as frequently. Children from low-income families have lower living standards, learn fewer employable skills, and earn less money as adults. In the absence of effective programs to address it, this is the reason poverty tends to persist from one generation to the next.

Mahmood (2024) points out that while Maslow's theory has been monumental in understanding human motivation, a significant issue in the theory is the lack of inclusivity towards children living in poverty. Mahmood explains, according to Maslow's theory children living in poverty are unable to advance to the higher levels

of psychological and emotional needs or fulfil them because they are stranded at the base of the pyramid due to the lack of food, warmth etc. Maslow's theory ignores the mental and emotional challenges of children living in poverty, and it can be seen as a privilege and an unattainable luxury to be capable of reaching self-actualisation. (Mahmood, 2024)

3. Essay.

Maslow's significance in understanding Child Development.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a fundamental psychological theory offering insight into human motivation and development. Maslow's theory highlights how a child's physical, emotional and psychological needs must be satisfied in a particular order so that learning and healthy growth can take place. The significance of Maslow's hierarchy in understanding child development will be discussed in this essay, focusing on how meeting these needs will impact a child's social, emotional and cognitive growth, as well as the role caregivers and practitioners play in fostering an environment that enables those needs to be met.

Transitions:

Defining transitions, Allingham (2008) suggests that a transition in the Early Years is any change that affects the routines children are used to.

Birth To 5 Matters (No Date) explains, that having good transitions in the Early Years can recognise the significance of feeling 'known'. To ensure every young child has the best possible education, consistency should be maintained at home, with significant others and in all environments that compromise each child's learning journey.

Birth To 5 Matters believes that children who experience early transitions with empathy are better prepared to handle the other transitions they face throughout life. (No Date)

Brooker (2008) suggests that by holding casual meetings, parents and practitioners can establish good relationships. These relationships can be strengthened by the practitioner visiting the child's home or inviting the parent to spend time in the educational environment. By doing this, the parent can share information with the practitioner about the child's routines and preferences, making the transition process easier for the child and helping them to feel safe and secure in the new environment.

The City of Bradford MDC (2020) points out it is highly likely that children from diverse backgrounds and experiences will attend educational settings. Helping them to establish a sense of identity as individuals and as members of their new group, is an element of assisting with the transition process.

When children feel as if they belong, they can learn confidently, form friendships and experiment with new ideas. Feeling safe and secure is one of the basic human needs according to Maslow's Hierarchy of needs. When a child feels safe, their emotional well-being improves and their ability to establish new relationships improves, and this helps with their adjustment to a new environment. (City of Bradford MDC, 2020)

Attachment:

Bowlby (1997, cited NSPCC Learning, 2021) describes attachment as a lasting connection between human beings, and although a child may develop attachments to multiple caregivers, the most significant and long-lasting relationship is with those who have been given close care since early infancy.

Mentally Healthy Schools (No Date) believe that good attachment depends on how close parents and other caregivers are to the child both physically and emotionally, and how well they can respond to their basic needs in a way that makes the child feel safe and provides a stable foundation for infants to explore the world.

Safety is at the heart of attachment. (Chris, 2021) Practitioners can assist children to feel protected and cared for and reassure them that they are available during times of need, or that making mistakes are acceptable. Practitioners need to maintain consistency throughout this process to help children develop a secure attachment style. Chris (2021) explains one of the basic needs identified by Maslow's hierarchy of needs is safety. Maslow contends that without first feeling safe, it is impossible to climb higher in the pyramid.

Basic Needs:

According to Birth To 5 Matters (No Date), having access to healthy food, a clean and safe environment, suitable clothing, healthcare, rest and sleep, and loving relationships are all components of good physical health in children.

This view is supported by UNICEF (No Date) who believe that children are entitled to the best medical care available, safe and clean living conditions, clean water, and nutritious food.

The Peaceful Parent Institute believes that a child will typically be less stressed, happier, more self-assured and more cooperative if their basic needs are satisfied. However, for a neurotypical child, persistently aggressive, chaotic, withdrawn or otherwise problematic behaviour could indicate a sign of unfulfilled needs, and to consider this before moving forward. (No Date)

The WHO express that having access to the things listed above is critical, for children to grow and develop to their fullest potential.

To respond to the needs of young children, parents and practitioners may require assistance from outside partnerships, and to promote a child's health and development, support may involve addressing the mental health needs of caregivers. (No Date)

According to Dhvani (2024), Maslow's theory is becoming more popular in the education sector as a means of inspiring children. Practitioners must keep in mind that meeting every need of every child is not possible and that while practitioners have no control over the life of the child at home, they have the resources, time and ability to provide for them in the learning environment.

Dhvani (2024) goes on to state that in Maslow's Hierarchy, the highest need is physiological, which includes the biological needs for survival. Making sure the children in the practitioner's care are having their needs met is critical, as children will not be able to prioritise their education if their biological needs are not satisfied. The practitioner can meet these needs by providing snacks, regular breaks, access to fresh air, and a suitable temperature of the environment.

Wales:

The Welsh government (2023) believe that childhood is a time when children go to school and play, develop their strengths and self-assurance, and receive support and affection from their family and a wider network of compassionate adults. Children should be free from fear, safe from violence, and shielded from exploitation and abuse during this time in their lives. The Welsh Government further believes that childhood, therefore includes much more than the time between birth and adulthood, it refers to the quality of those years and even the state and circumstances of a child's life. (2023)

The Welsh Government (2023) created the NEST framework as a planning tool used to develop mental health and well-being and support services for infants, children and young people, caregivers and their extended families throughout Wales, to guarantee a whole system approach.

The multiple sections of the framework include **equity, diversity and inclusion, a rights-based approach, values-led, psychologically informed, child development, trusted adults, working together, no wrong door, safe and supported communities, easy access to expertise, co-produced innovation, and well-being across education.** (Welsh Government, 2023)

Conclusion:

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is significant to Early Years practice because it offers a clear framework for understanding how to meet the physical, emotional, and psychological needs of children, to support their overall development.

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