Social-emotional development of a child

"Social-emotional development includes the child's experience, expression, and management of emotions and the ability to establish positive and rewarding relationships with others" (Cohen 2005, cited in California Department of Education, 2019).

Theorists

Bowlby's attachment theory explains the importance of parental interaction as this is where a child builds their trust. Bowlby (1960) believes that a positive relationship with a parent is essential for a child's development. Theorists argue that children who do not experience this will be more likely to have poor well-being, intellectual and social development (Learning Theories, 2020).

Vygotsky (1934) argues that children learn best through socialisation. Further to this, he suggested that adults should be used as a "tool" for children to ask questions and solve problems (Family consumer sciences, n.d.). For children to develop, they require positive reinforcement from their parents so that milestones can be achieved (Swain, 2017).

Milestones and challenges

Young children are more inclined to play by themselves, whereas an older child will begin to make friendships and interact with others (PBS, n.d.). This allows children to encounter the emotions of others and understand what makes a good friend. Furthermore, children develop awareness of other people's perceptions of them, for example they will now understand how it feels to be embarrassed about a situation. In line with Bowlby's attachment theory, children may lack confidence to socialise if they do not have a close relationship with their care giver. A child who encounters

positive social interaction will increase their sensory stimulation as they will be making memories. According to Blakesley (2017), it is vital that a child creates memories as this is how they understand right from wrong in social situations; for example, they learn that sharing toys is right. Children who lack socialisation in early years are more likely to have difficulties with communication and making friends (Kid sense, 2020). Additionally, behavioural issues may arise. The lack of socialisation can cause children to act out in a way that is not appropriate, making their behaviour difficult to deal with (Fleck, 2017). A practitioner who can support children to overcome this is a cognitive behavioural therapist. This can allow a child to reframe their emotions and create a positive outlook on life (Holt, 2011).

Moreover, there are children who will encounter barriers when evolving their social-emotional development. For instance, a child who experiences abuse at home will have low self-esteem (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 2016). Therefore, socialisation is a big task for them, increasing the risk of anxiety and depression levels within children (University of Arizona, 2017). The National Health Service (2020) stated that children's intellectual development will be greatly hit if they have low self-esteem as there is no self-belief that they can do something and do it well, resulting in disengagement at school and in social situations.

Practitioners that can help

Children have the right to be protected from abuse, violence, and neglect (UNCRC, 2019). Therefore, practitioners should be aware of any mistreatment and safeguarding issues when working with children. Teachers can evaluate whether a child is developing appropriately, if not there may be underlying problems. This is when social workers and teachers can work together to establish if they can support a child's development if needed.

Policy and Legislation

Policies and legislation are in place to ensure that a child's social-emotional development is maintained, and children are provided with equal opportunities regardless of their background. Firstly, there is a policy named Supporting Families in the Foundation Years, 2011. This policy emphasises the importance of an all-

round positive development for children to allow them to have a successful future. Additionally, there is the ‘Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage’ policy, which includes social and emotional development in their programme to encourage children to be confident and thriving individuals from an early age (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2012).

It is understood that adult supervision is key to early social development. Attachment is typically formed with the child’s mother and they will learn from them. As a child gets older it will display in their development if they have experienced this support from their care giver (Learning Theories, 2020). Both Bowlby and Vygotsky emphasise adult supervision as being the key to a child’s development, giving them the confidence to socialise and learn. Therefore, it is highlighted that those who do not have initial support will lack in socialisation and understanding throughout their life. This can cause difficulties for children as they will not be able to justify why they struggle to socialise and control their emotions.

Physiological development of a child

“Physical development is how babies and young children gain control of their bodies, but it also includes how children learn about keeping themselves active and healthy and how they learn to use equipment and materials successfully and safely” (Early Years Matters, 2020).

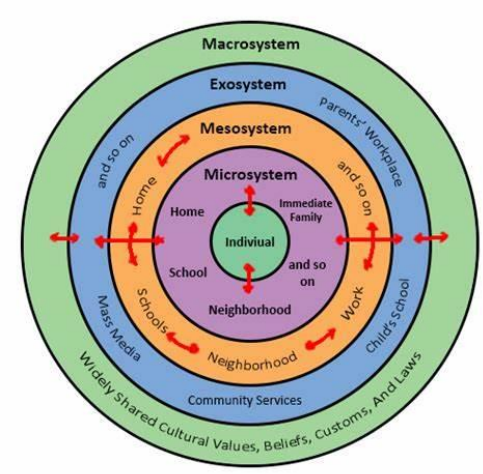
Physical development is spilt into two aspects:

- Growth, for example, their height and weight.
- Development, for example, a child’s fine and gross motor skills (Welsh Government HWB, n.d.).

<u>Theorist</u>

Arnold Gesell (1925) was a psychologist who observed children’s physical development. Gesell observed that children will only meet milestones when they are ready to. In line with the nature Vs Nurture debate, Gesell believed that nurture had a bigger impact on a child’s physical development. Gesell claimed there is a “normal” way for children to develop regards to age, for example, the age a baby will begin to crawl, walk and babble (Learning Theories, 2020).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) developed ecological system theory to aid understanding between a child and their environment. His theory attempted to make life fair and equal for all children (Learning Theories, 2020). In summary, the ecological system had four layers and the child is at the centre. The first layer is the microsystem, followed by exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. Within these four rings, observations were made on how much impact family, friends, school and social events had on a child’s development (St Rosemary institution, 2020). For example, most recently ‘tummy time’ has become a key part of a baby’s development for them to learn how to hold



their head up with no supervision, however, unless parents allow for their child to do that they will miss out (Pathways, 2020).

Milestone and challenges

It is important to address that every child will develop in their own time and milestones are in place to monitor a child's progression (Morin, 2019).

Physical milestones for children include gross motor skills and fine motor skills (Thomas, 2017). Gross motor skills are typically the first to be seen in the start of child development. This is where a baby will begin to develop the skills to sit up, stand, balance and eventually walk. As a child gets older, this will be the skill they use when they learn to ride a bike and swim (Department of Health and Human services, 2020). Gross motor skills are important as they create good posture and body movement (Parent circle, n.d.). In addition, fine motor skills are also developed from a young age; a baby will grip a parent's finger. Around nine - twelve months a baby will begin to pick up objects, for example, at dinner time they may want to hold a spoon (Department of Health and Human services, 2020). Fine motor skills continue to develop throughout childhood, for example, when a child begins to learn how to handwrite and draw. Fine motor skills are important for children for children to carry out everyday activities and self-care (Fun Early Learning, 2020).

Furthermore, another milestone that can be seen in children is co-ordination. A child will begin to develop their hand-eye co-ordination when playing sports. It has been claimed that a child with poor coordination can be a sign of additional learning needs, so it is always important to observe a child's development and make sure that a child is meeting their milestones (National Health Service, 2019).

A barrier may occur for a child who has a disability when meeting their physical development needs. Firstly, environmental factors may include the child not getting enough parental support at home (Cleaver, Unell and Aldgate, 2011) or a physical difficulty they may be a struggle to move around the house if it has not been designed for their disability. Teaching staff may make assumptions of a child's ability, therefore exclude them from an activity (Cossar, Brandon and Jordon, 2011). For

example, a child who struggles with following instructions due to a learning difficulty may be left out of a physical activity.

Practitioners that can help

Initially, a health visitor will make sure that the baby is meeting their milestones (Mitchell, 2019). As a child grows, the nursery teacher and teacher become influential on a child's physical development (Stanberry, 2020).. For example, school is where a child will begin to learn how to write, using their fine motor skills. In terms of overcoming barriers, occupational therapists can support a child and make the adjustments to their home to ensure that their physical development is not disadvantaged. In a schooling environment, learning support assistants can guide a child when in lessons they find challenging to make sure they do not miss out on developing their physical needs (Whitley, 2011).

Policy and Legislation

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 reinforces the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. By meeting physical development milestones, a child can stay physically fit through to adulthood (Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, 2020). It is a child's right to develop to their full potential, this includes children with disabilities (UNCRC, 2019). The Equality Act 2010 makes sure that everyone is protected from discrimination, therefore, no child should be left out of improving their physical development (Government. UK, 2020).

Overall, a child's physical development encourages readiness for adulthood. The simple steps a child learns over the years provides them with the adequate mobility and muscles to perform everyday activities. Fine motor skills allow for a child to have increased confidence in day-to- day activities (Fun Early Learning, 2020). In addition, gross motor skills create good posture and movement range which allows for participation in sports; increased physical activity is good for mental health.

Therefore, good physical development as a child aids in developing a healthy adult (Parent circle, n.d.).

Language development of a child

“Language development is the process by which children come to understand and communicate language during early childhood” (Children's Health, 2020).

Theorist

The most significant theorist for language development is Noam Chomsky. Chomsky argued that all children are born with the capability to learn a language. Chomsky (1960) also highlighted that to guide the learning of a language a child will use their “Language Acquisition Device” which allows for children to understand, use and structure language effectively (Tutor2u, 2018).

Milestones and challenges

During childhood, language development begins from as young as three - twelve months. This is where you will see a baby beginning to coo, laugh and babble. During the next stage, babies will begin to say a few words which have meaning to them, for example “dada”. As the child develops, their vocabulary will grow, and sentences will become more complex. By the time, a child is age three, they will be expected to hold a conversation (Department of Health and Human services, 2020). Moreover, by the time a child starts school they will be able to continue to evolve their language development (National Health Service, n.d.).

However, teachers will be aware that during a child’s first year at school there will be a high degree of differentiation in the classroom (Wiliam, n.d.). There will be children who have limited speech and language development. This can become a barrier for a child at the start of their educational journey and could lead to a lack of confidence throughout their learning (UK Essays, 2018). Delays in speech and language can have a negative impact on a child’s development. According to Sample (2014) babies who are spoken to consistently are more likely to have an increased language development. Additionally, delays in speech can be an early indication of a learning difficulty (Morin, 2020). For example, there is a link that those who have

dyslexia will have a late physical and language development (Mayo Clinic, 2020). Mencap (2020) stated that those who have a learning difficulty are more likely to experience mental health issues.

Lastly, it may become a challenge for those who struggle to communicate effectively. This can cause frustration and a lack of interest in social activities, including school. Therefore, the child may become isolated which is detrimental to their language development (Blakesley, 2017).

Practitioners that can help

The first initial observation of the child will be provided by the health visitor who will examine if a baby is meeting the language development milestones, for example if the baby is babbling at twelve months old (Mitchell, 2019). The next practitioner a child may encounter is their nursery teacher. Experience suggests that nursery teachers are expected to encourage two-three-year olds' language development and refer any children on to other health professions if concerns arise. Concerns regarding language development will typically result in a child being referred to a speech and language therapist who can support and encourage their speech (Therapy directory, 2020). Teachers are also expected to support a child with their learning and extra support should be provided by learning support assistance to boost a child's confidence in the classroom (Stanberry, 2020). Those who lack confidence are likely to have low self-esteem (Blakesley, 2017). Therefore, counsellors can also guide children to having a positive approach to further developing their language skills (Hoggard, 2018).

Policy and Legislation

There is a framework in place to help guide speech and language therapists. This known as 'The speech, language and communication framework, 2011' which can be accessed online for individuals to gain an understanding of how they can encourage a child's language development (The communication trust, n.d.). Further to this, there are schemes in place that children can access. For example, 'Reach out to read' which encourages families to read, not just children (Reach out and Read, 2020). According to Froma (2020) reading is vital when developing language.

To conclude, early years are crucial to a child's language development (NDNA, 2019). The interaction a young child encounters will show when they begin to talk. Chomsky's theory informs that all children can learn a language, however, the time frame that children develop can differ (Tutor2u, 2018). There are a significant number of barriers that can affect a child's development in this aspect, however, there are many practitioners that help with children's speech and language development.

Cognitive development of a child

"Cognitive development means the growth of a child's ability to think and reason" (Lucile Packard Children's Hospital Stanford, 2020).

Theorist

A theorist that explores cognitive development is Jean Piaget. Piaget's (1936) theory suggests that intellectual development within the child develops in stages, starting from young childhood to adolescence (Learning Theories, 2020).

Children begin by entering the sensorimotor stage. This allows for children aged between birth – two years to use their bodies and sense to explore and learn. This leads onto the preoperational stage for children ages two-seven. Their learning is more guided by using language and personal actions. Following that, children aged seven – twelve begin to understand and take their own and other's emotions into consideration; they start to think logically. Lastly, Piaget's theory concludes that the final stage of cognitive development is formal operational stage for children aged thirteen – to adulthood. Thinking will become part of everyday experiences and thoughts will be put into perspective (McLeod, 2018).

Additionally, Maria Montessori (1948) emphasised the impact poverty has on child development. Montessori argued that every child has something to offer the world, however, sometimes their environmental factors let them down. Montessori used Piaget's theory to create her method and established that children can only learn if they are provided with adequate resources. Importantly, Montessori valued the characteristics of play and believed that play was most influential on a child's development (Learning Theories, 2020).

Milestones and challenges

A baby begins by displaying their cognitive development through focusing their attention on people and objects. Cognitive development is important for babies as this is how they communicate with their caregiver when required, for example, crying for their milk. At around nine months a baby will begin to interact, such as, playing peek-a-boo. From watching my niece grow I have learnt that playing peek-a-boo makes her feel very happy, which is positive for her emotional development. By the time a child turns four they will be able to sort shapes, colours and follow instructions. The ability to follow instructions is important to a child's development as this helps them remain safe. Activities such as puzzles and problem solving become part of maintaining a child's intellectual development (Department of Health and Human services, 2020). According to Jha (2012) a child's brain needs to be intellectually stimulated to make sure their brain develops.

It is understood that play can be influential in developing a child's cognitive development. Playgroup is a great environment for children to continue to evolve. The setting allows children to think about what they want to play with next and maybe who they would like to play with (Raising Children Network, 2020). When a family lives in poverty, childcare is not always affordable, and children can miss out on the opportunity to develop early year thinking and problem-solving. Children who live in poverty will have a decreased Cognitive development, due to the lack of reading and language they have experienced in their early stages of development. This may impact on their ability to learn important lessons for adulthood (Froma, 2020).

Practitioners that can help

Nursery teachers begin supporting poorer children by creating a sense of structure to their day. From experience with working with children aged two-three, I observe how well the children respond to having a set routine and introduction to personal

hygiene. This routine continues for a child as they leave to start primary school. Similarly, teachers incorporate social justice and make sure that children are given equal opportunities to develop when at school, poorer children may not have a garden, therefore the school playground may be the only safe, outside area for a child to problem solve (Minkel, 2019). In addition, children who lack cognitive development can have support from a play therapist. The play therapist will be able to stimulate the child's brain and encourage cognitive development through a range of activities (British Association of Play Therapist, 2014). If a child is experiencing 'extreme poverty', social services will begin to support families. In the line of decisions being made in the best interest of the child, evaluation must take place to establish the best outcome for their development (UNCRC,2019).

Policy and Legislation

Playgroup are very beneficial to a child developing their cognitive development. Wales have introduced 'flying start' which allows for children from disadvantaged backgrounds to attend nursery, however, this is only for post coded areas so there are still many children missing out (Welsh Government, 2019). 'Social Justice Outcomes Framework, 2012' allows for families to be supported effectively, therefore, children's development is kept on track, including their cognitive development (HM Government, 2012).

This text expresses the stress poverty can have on a child's cognitive development. Piaget's theory is split into four areas corresponding to the child's age; the theorist expressed that a child cannot move onto the 'next stage' if they have not adequately developed in the previous stage (McLeod, 2018). Therefore, children living in poverty are more likely to have a lower academic performance (Jensen, 2009). Research shows that children in poverty are twenty percent below their peers in cognitive development scoring (Child Poverty Action Group, 2020).

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