Explain how theories of development and frameworks to support development influence current practice.

As psychology has developed over the past 100 years, psychologists have sought to understand as much about the human psyche as possible. Much importance has been placed on the developmental arena for children, and a variety of theories have been put forward to explain the different ways that children learn. Most of them stem around the idea that ability is either innate, or it is learned and based on the opportunities given to a child. This is nature versus nurture.

Psychological theories are not necessarily completely correct, but they may not be completely wrong either. It is often seen that one theory or another is given precedence for a time, but this is as much to do with trends and fashions of thinking about the subject, as much as it is to do with whether or not it is correct.

However, psychological theories and frameworks of learning development are useful for learning support because they supply a base point or model through which professionals can interpret behaviour, results, and achievement.

Different psychological theories.

**Psychologists and their theories of learning development**

**Freud**

Sigmund Freud was the famous instigator of psychoanalytics, and he believed that personality is created from three parts: id, ego, and superego. He said that each of these areas develop as the child grows, but that the development is subconscious, fuelled by the psychological needs of a child's make up.
Id
The id is the bit of personality within us that is entirely instinctive with a biological basis. Babies cry when they are hungry, no matter how annoying or upsetting or inconvenient the noise may be to others. A toddler may wee in his nappy as soon as it has been changed, because he needed to; he doesn't try to hold on to it just because he has only had a clean nappy on for a few minutes.

Ego
Ego is the part of us that understands our behaviour can affect the way that our needs are met. For example, a young child may wait for dinner without crying (unlike the baby in the earlier example) because she knows that dinner will be soon and won't come sooner even if she cries. This might be especially true if the child is likely to be told off by a parent for crying prior to dinner time. A child who wants to use the potty to go to the toilet may hold on and not wee in his nappy.

Superego
Superego develops later than the other two areas, and is linked with the development of a conscience. Guilt is a development of the superego, and constitutes a form of punishment for some people; therefore, it can be said that the superego sometimes develops conflicting views to the ego. For example, a child who is only halfway through his dinner but is already feeling very full may still eat everything on his plate if he feels bad that all that food will be wasted or that his parent spent all that time on a nice dinner that he can't eat.

Skinner
The ‘father’ of operant conditioning was B.F. Skinner, who purported that learning is based on consequence. He believed that when a specific behaviour stimulates a pleasant consequence that means we are likely to repeat the behaviour. However, when the consequence is not pleasant, we are less likely to do it again – in fact that we are likely to avoid the behaviour.

It is felt that this works just as well for learning behaviour as it does for other types, and school workers will often find that a child who has been praised for good work is likely to try hard the next time, particularly if it is the same task. This type of support is called positive reinforcement, and is used for many types of training, including dog training!
Did you know?

In 2008, a government report known as the Marmot Review was published. It looked at the impact of environmental factors on health in general, and found that the more deprived an entire neighbourhood was, the more likely it would have characteristics that could impact on health. It indicated that where there was poor housing, bad air quality, few green spaces and facilities for children to play, and more traffic risks, that health inequalities would be greater and there would be a higher risk of crime.

**Piaget**

Jean Piaget developed a constructivist theory that the way children learn and learn to think is based on their age, experiences, and their stage of development. He suggested learning through experience is built up as the child grows older, and as their experiences change and become wider, they adapt the things they believe in order to accommodate that.

For example, a child whose sole experience of cake is chocolate-flavoured will believe that cake is always chocolate-flavoured, until offered cake of a different type. The new type of cake will extend their understanding of the world a little.

It is important that children experience the world as widely and safely as possible because this increases their understanding of what is out there, and therefore increases their learning. Eventually, children become mature enough to consider experiences that they have not yet seen for themselves.

**Watson**

John Watson was the behaviourist psychologist who suggested that everyone is born with the same innate abilities, and that they can be taught anything, no matter how 'clever' or 'impaired' the person. He based much of his theory on a famous study by Ivan Pavlov: Pavlov's dogs were kept in cages, and every time food was brought to them, a bell would be rung. When the food appeared, the dogs salivated. After a while, Pavlov brought no food, but the bell was still rung. This resulted in the dogs salivating to the sound of the bell, despite the absence of their food.

Watson's theory therefore ignored social and emotional factors of learning and development, and suggested that learning could take part as a type of training, to behave in a particular way with a given stimulus.
Abraham Maslow was a humanist who posited that individuals have certain needs that must be fulfilled in order for progression to take place. For example, children must be healthy, they must have regular access to food, and they must be able to sleep adequately before they are able to learn. They must also feel safe before this is possible. These are very basic needs, but some children go without some of their most basic needs being met, and this does affect their development significantly. Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs' pyramid is a well-known representation of his theory. It shows the most prevalent needs at the bottom of the pyramid (see diagram) because they are greater in effect and are the most urgent. 'Physiological needs' refers to the basic requirements that a child or baby has in order to survive. The next set of needs is around safety (and again, this refers to survival), which is an essential requirement that must be put before any learning or personal development can take place.

Belonging and love are the needs of all human beings, but while these are important concepts for a well-developed person, they are not more important than the basic needs of survival that are represented further down the hierarchy. Esteem refers to a person's need to believe in his- or herself in order to progress in a healthy and useful way. Many adults will find that their own esteem (the way others view them) and self-esteem (the way they view themselves) is quite low and this
affects many areas of their ability to do things, learn new things, and move forwards with their lives. In the same way, so the development of children is also affected. Self-actualisation is the pinnacle of the developed person. This is the point where, having fully developed all the other needs that lead to guaranteed survival and healthy development, a person can confidently decide what they want, how they want to be, and how they wish to progress in the world.

### Bandura

Similarly to Skinner’s operant conditioning and Watson’s behaviourist theory, Albert Bandura’s theory of social learning encompasses the idea of conditioning. He understands that learning happens through observation of other people, imitating and copying what those people do, and modelling. Modelling is where someone else does what is supposed to be done in the exact way it is expected, and then children are able to imitate the model behaviour without being told what to do. This imitation means that children and young people may often copy what their parents or peers do, without instructions. To Bandura, this indicates that learning is spontaneous.

### Framework to support learning (humanism)

Pedagogy is the theory of teaching and learning, and social pedagogy is a humanist framework upon which support for a child's development can be based. Bearing in mind Maslow's hierarchy of needs, social pedagogy takes a holistic approach to a child's needs, dealing with them through school, health, spiritual life, friendships, family, and the community. Social pedagogy places the child at the centre of their own education and development, and encourages their interaction and involvement with the world.