

Part 1

Dyer, (2018) argues that the role of leaders play a huge role in the transmission of the early years and there is no doubt that leadership is important in improving the quality of service delivery in early childhood. When looking into catalytic leadership, Jioner (2017), describes catalytic leaders in a managers position as articulating an inspiring vision to the setting and to bring together the appropriate individuals to carrying out these visions. Also, catalytic leaders are there to empower other individuals and to actively facilitate development for those around them. When comparing catalytic leadership to other leaderships styles such as an Autocratic leadership style, catalytic leadership is a more positive and effective while working in an early year setting and team. For example when looking into autocratic leadership, it traditionally has one leader who will direct others, have limited discussions and tend to be more careless of other practitioners thoughts and feelings or willingness to listen to new ideas, and within the team the feeling of teamwork or working together does not apply (MA Education,2012).When comparing all these factors of autocratic leadership style to a catalytic leadership style, catalytic leaderships allows all staff members in the setting to express opinions or ideas, catalytic leaders also listen and respect all staff and enjoy sharing ideas. Catalytic leaders also encourage staff to take part in decision making and allow individuals in the workplace to make mistakes and continue to motivate staff (Powers, 2017).

In early years settings, having a catalytic leadership styles can impact the environment, practitioners and staff, and children in their care. Matthew, *et al.* (2014) carries out a report that explores and evaluates how leadership affects teaching in schools. A statement made in this report it that leadership is key to raising standards in schools. In this report the leader described is the role of a headteacher, although it does comment on how the characteristics of a headteacher can impact the setting, for example they explain, high quality leaders, such as headteachers are effective when focusing on needs and progression of all children and having commitment to empower

staff and practitioners around them. This statement is in line with what a catalytic leader aims to do. Although, this is not always the case in some settings that have a hierarchy approach.

McDowall Clark, (2012) understands and promotes the meaning of catalytic leadership as the ability to make and inspire change in the setting, regardless of position of power or job titles. Although, this style of leadership shines a positive light on allowing all individuals to have a voice, in many workplaces and early years settings such as primary schools may have a 'hierarchy' approach. This means that individuals in the setting are treated different due to higher/lower levels or status (Marriam-Webster, 2022). When thinking of a typical primary school classroom layout there is traditionally one main teacher and up to two teaching assistants' staff which work alongside the main teacher. The teaching assistants are responsible for supporting the main teacher by preparing lesson plans and they are responsible for caring and supporting the children in the setting. Teaching assistants will often work in groups of children and spend more time supporting children who may need more support (CareerTeachers, n.d). Dyer, (2018) carried out research by interviewing newly early years graduates about how they would define their own roles in their setting. The main aim for these interviews were to draw out, as early years practitioners, what they understood their own role, purpose and status to be in their early year settings. One individual whom was interviewed by Dyer, (2018) role was a teaching assistant in a KS1 setting. She comments and shows awareness of the hierarchies and will often suggest ways or bring awareness to the class teacher when she notices that some children may be struggling and may need additional support. She speaks on the importance of this her own role as she worries that the teacher may not be able to provide support or acknowledge struggles due to workload, and instead from this worry she will use her own initiative to find ways to support children who may struggle. This example shows the importance of having a catalytic leadership style in early years settings as, Zachery, (2011) explains the 5 components of the catalyst model, with 1 component being connected. Zachery (2011) describes catalytic leaders to build a connection and professional relationship with other professionals and individuals around them. Again,

from this example it shows how newly graduates can bring personal knowledge and show a catalytic style of leadership. Also, by gaining positive relationships, professionals in early years settings can come together and plan ways to care for and support the children around them. To support this further, Siraj-Blatchford and Hallett, (2014) and Whalley (2011), believe that by having newly graduated Early Years practitioners in the setting they will suggest and bring positive changes, improvements and shape the practice.

On the other hand, early years settings and school hierarchy can cause a negative impact when implementing catalytic leadership. Cooper, (2014) states that teachers believe that leadership aligned with different factors such as competition, additional responsibilities, and personal recognition, something they felt uncomfortable to embrace. Also, to be a leader it takes confidence and the individual needs to feel comfortable leading. On the other hand, catalytic leaderships involve a number of different practitioners supporting each other and embracing new ideas, and methods. Cooper, (2014) also discusses the idea of informal leadership. This is in line with the idea of that leadership and hierarchy does not impact catalytic leaderships. Cooper, (2014) expresses that 'teachers who are driven by their commitment to children, other teachers, families, and the early childhood profession can engage in informal leadership practices, regardless of their formal role.' McDowall Clark, (2021) also questions confidence in individuals who take charge or show leadership without office role, he states 'It became evident that this was an issue of concern for many who equated leadership with 'being in charge' yet were not themselves in positions of authority' this shows lack of confidence and fearful of not being taken seriously due to 'lower' role in the setting. However, the aim of catalytic leaderships is to empower those around you and make everyone in the team feel welcomed to share and demonstrate opinions and ideas says McDowall Clark, (2012).

The idea of catalytic leadership is that 'anyone can be a leader' states McDowall Clark, (2021). Although, in education and school settings this may be more difficult than a nursery or early years settings. As spoken previously schools have a level of hierarchy.

A report by Taj, (2022) recognises how teaching assistants in schools face feeling over-worked and underappreciated. Taj, (2022) speaks about current events, Covid-19, and how teaching assistants and support staff stepped up to provide care and education for children at home or attending school. Although teaching assistants or support staff may not have the same qualifications as teachers, they still provide the same amount of care to children in their classrooms. With this in mind it really shows the impact that catalytic leadership can have in an early year setting. The benefit of having a catalytic leader present in school settings is, as stated by Crawford, (2019) one of the main characteristics of a catalyst is passion. Crawford, (2019) describes this passion as euphuistic about work and will continue to motivate, share passion and pass on positive interactions with teammates and staff around them. It is important to see everyone as an individual and to treat everyone with respect and to motivate others.

To further outline the positive of catalytic leadership skills within early years settings, outdoor agencies and opinions and feedback from other professional backgrounds can help support children in the setting. For example, if a childcare practitioner picks up on a barrier or challenge that a child is facing such as speech impairment or delay. When providing a catalytic setting and styled environment, all individuals are able to engage and take part in decision-making, in an early year setting this would to identify where support is needed and to appropriately provide this (Bush, 2011). Again, from being in a catalytic style setting, staff will feel comfortable and more likely to reach out for support in the best interest of the child. This can also affect relationships with parents as the child's best interests are always put first. Toomer *et al.* (2018) supports this by stating that leadership and teamwork must meet and provide appropriate measures to face challenges presented to them. McDowall Clark, (2012) states that by having a catalytic leadership role within an early years setting can improve the quality and care. He states this as he believes that catalytic leaders are able to reflect continuously which can lead to ongoing improvements.

Drastically changing an environment or areas within the environment can be very stressful and difficult for young children and early years staff, But instead McDowall Clark, (2012) also states how catalytic leaders within early years setting make improvement and positive changes through small and incremental steps, not only is this positive for the children in the environment, it also gives practitioner's time to get comfortable with the change and to reflect on the positives or challenges as a team.

As Catalytic leaderships provides empowerment, encourages discussion between employees, builds upon different views and encourages teams to work together, it is important to outline the positives that teamwork and building relationships in the setting can improve quality and work life. 'The Catalyst Effect is a practical primer to help all leaders inspire teamwork and collaboration to boost team performance and achieve great results.' Says, Bill Stanczykiewicz, in Toomer, *et al.* (2018). Teamwork and good relationships in early years settings is not only positive for staff working, but also the children and the setting. Douglass, (2019) makes an interesting statement of that when adults in early years settings have positive and respectful interactions it can demonstrate and encourage children to be respectful and mirror behaviour on how children should interact positively with staff and other children at the setting.

To conclude section 1, catalytic leadership is arguably one of the most effective types of leadership when working in early years and education settings. McDowall Clark, (2012) shares key features of concepts of catalytic leaderships, which include commitment to professional development. As a whole, early years practitioners all have the same vision and desire to care for and support children's development. By having a catalyst within the setting, it will support staff to work together to keep the children at the heart of the setting and to have the children's best interests throughout, (Unicef, n, d).

Part 2

Over the years, the way children are seen and treated has drastically changed in a positive way. Years ago, children were treated more like 'mini adults' rather than children, says Lopez, (2015). Children were expected to work and provide for their families. In August of 1843, a law was passed in Britain that put an end to women and children under the age of 10 from working in underground mines. Before this law was passed, children were seen as 'perfect' for working in these conditions due to mobility and their small sizes, especially in mines (MyLearning, n, d). Relating to child labour, in 1933 another law in Britain was passed to restrict the use of children under 14 years old for employment. This Law came under The Children and Young Persons Act 1933 where the term 'child' was any individual of school ages and was strictly forbidden from child labour. In Wales, the Welsh Government decided to make the UNCRC rights articles law in Wales, (Welsh Government, 2015). The Un Convention of the Rights of the Child, UNCRC explores children's rights and puts these rights into place in early years settings and in general environments. In regard to children's labour as a whole, written in the UNCRC is article 32 which outlines Governments responsibility to set minimum ages for children to work (Unicef, n, d).

In relation to childhood labour and the mistreatment to children, A school in Bournemouth described how children born in Victorian times would often get beaten and punished by trusted practitioners. Physical punishments were often used in schools and early years settings (Victorian life, n, d). Teachers would often use canes or wooden pallets to punish children, the reasonings for the punishments varied between missing school, being rude, laziness or not listening. From this experience, in 1986 corporal punishment was prohibited in all education (End Corporal Punishment, 2022). This change was made from the introduction of The Children's Act 1989. The aim of The Children's Act 1989 was to give every child the right of protection from abuse, punishment and exploitation. The act also gives children the right to have

inquiries made and impact the safeguarding of their welfare, the act aims to put the child's care, safety and best interest first (Batty, 2004). In 2004 the Children's Act was re-introduced with updated standards and legislation. Before the Children's Act 2004 was introduced, the Care Standards Act 2000 was developed to introduce ways that ensure agencies and early years providers understand their duty of care within their roles (The Care Standards Act, 2022).

Reflecting on how Wales has overcome treatment to children, again children in Wales would face physical punishment in early years settings although, the reasonings for this punishment was slightly different. In Wales children were physically punished from speaking Welsh, this was known as the 'Welsh Not'. The 'Welsh Not' was given to children whom spoke Welsh during the school day, it was a method to discourage children from speaking Welsh as, at the end of the school day, whoever was wearing the 'Welsh Not' would be severely physically punished (BBC, 2014).

A way that Wales has overcome this treatment of children is by banning physical punishment. Acts such as smacking children will be made illegal in March 2022. This is a positive and hugely impacts the treatment of children, (Welsh Government, 2022). In Wales, The Care Standards Act 2000 established the Children's Commissioner's for Wales as an independent children's human rights institution. (The Children's Commissioner for Wales, n, d). The Children's Commissioner for Wales is responsible of supporting children and young people in knowing what their rights are and enforce the rights of young people documented in the UNCRC. When revisiting the Children's Act of 2004, within the act it states in section 2A that 'The Children's Commissioner must, in particular, have regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in considering for the purposes of the primary function what constitute the rights and interests of children'. To support this, The Children's Commissioner for Wales has demonstrated and actively found ways and resources for all schools in Wales to outline, present and explain children's rights. For example, many schools in Wales have promoted the UNCRC rights by introducing, 'Right of the month'. This is a positive way for children to learn about their own rights and a clear way of explaining

and demonstrating them (The Children's Commissioner for Wales, n, d A). As well as schools in Wales finding own ways of promoting and demonstrating children's rights, written in The Foundation Phase Curriculum, (2015) is the way that Welsh Government have summarised the UNCRC by identifying them and having 7 core aims relating to children's rights. Schools across Wales must follow and act these 7 cores aims to ensure children's rights are being met. An example of one of the aims is for children to be listened to, treated with respect, and have personal race and cultural identity recognised and respected.

As a part of UNICEF, (n, d) the UNCRC was created to support and promotes positive changes, children's rights and services around the world. The UNCRC sets out human rights of every individual under the age of 18. The UNCRC children's rights is a document that includes articles that outline children's rights. These articles were created by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Children and was developed in 1989. The Children's Commissioner's for Wales role is to support and encourage young children to be aware and know own rights. The UN Convention includes 54 articles that cover all areas of children's lives and aims to set out a range of children's rights that all children are entitled to, such as: civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Wales in 2004 formally adopted the UNCRC as the basis of policy making in which relates to children and young people. Also, in Wales children and young people's rights are also enshrined in Welsh law under 'Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011'. Within this law it outlines Wales' commitment and support to children's rights and the use of the UNCRC rights articles (Welsh Government, 2019).

Some examples of the UNCRC rights include; Article 2 'Non-discrimination'. These right outlines the importance of children's differences such as gender, language, religion, abilities and ethnicity (Unicef, n, d). This article highlights the need for discrimination against children and young people to stop and instead, support and celebrate differences. Wales have implemented this right by banishing punishment

for children who choose to speak Welsh as a first language. To support this, Wales have set out an action plan 'Cymraeg 2050' which aims to achieve one million Welsh speakers by 2050. The Welsh language is seen in a much more positive light and Welsh Government are implementing ways to succeed the Welsh language continuing (Welsh Government, 2017). Also written in the UNCRC is article 32 which outlines Governments responsibility to set minimum ages for children to work (Unicef, n,d)

Article 19 outlines the right of protection from violence, abuse and neglect. To support this right, Governments around the world must do the best they can at supporting and providing the right tools and measures to protect children from abuse, violence or neglect by parents or carers (Unicef, n, d). This links into the use of multi-agency working. 'Multiagency working is key to effective safeguarding and child protection' (Sidebotham *et al.* 2016). Multi-agency work has also improved significantly over the past years and the impact professionals have on children and young people's lives. The NSPCC, (2019) refers to multi-agency working as teamwork from a number of health care professionals and early years practitioners working together to support children and understand any risks that a child may be exposed to and how to take appropriate action to keep children safe. Multi-agency work has also improved significantly over the past years and the impact professionals have on children and young people's lives. However, in recent years, incidents have happen that has made individuals question multi-agency work. An example of this is the case of 'Baby P'. Peter Connelly, known as 'baby P' was a 17-month-old little boy who died in 2007 from months of continuous abuse. Before Baby p's death, authorities such as social workers, police and doctors had made visits around 60 times. This clearly shows big faults by health care workers. In his case, Baby P' general practitioner (GP) was criticised for not raising any concerns when finding bruises and marks on Baby P's body as false excuses were made to cover for the abuse. This case shows clearly how, if raising concerns or questioning at home care then maybe the incident and Baby P's death could have been avoided (Sellgren, 2010). After 'Baby P's' death, 58 recommendations were made for child protection reforms in 'The protection of children in England: a progress report' from Lord Iaming. This report explores and

demonstrates implementation of effective arrangements for safeguarding. Also, this case has made Government update guidelines and legislation and to create quality emphasis on; improving multi-agency working, the importance of early interventions, non-discrimination against children and to prevent abuse and neglect at home (BDA, n, d.)

Relating back to the idea of catalytic leadership and how it can impact the care of children. Early years graduates are potential reasonings for success and high quality care, for example, Toomer, *et al.* (2018) describes a key factor of 'The Catalyst Effect' as being able to spring ideas off to expertise's and gaining insight from other professionals and practitioners causing this to create and inspire new ideas. Early years graduates have fresh ideas and fresh knowledge of key factors such as UNCRC rights of the child, development stages and curriculum. Pacey (2020) discusses research shown that by having early years graduates in early years settings have improved children's learning outcomes in small but positive ways.

On the other hand, teachers or childcare practitioner whom have worked in the setting or environment for longer can have the same impact as newly graduates. One way to support staff's development is through training. According to Fairbrother, (2020) continuous professional development (CPD) is key to success in workplace settings, Fairbrother, (n,d) explains that CPD is an on-going series of training which offers a combination of approaches and resources that aim to support practitioners to understand the environment, current strategies and on-going issues. They then go on to emphasise the importance of CPD in childcare settings as inspectors such as OFSTEAD and Care Inspectors Wales (CIW) will expect staff to be aware and have knowledge on on-going issues surrounding the children in their care. However, with this pressure on settings to provide training and ways for staff to develop can cause stress on budgeting, resources and time.

Lastly, in the most recent way that children's voices and opinions are heard and no longer ignored is through the new curriculum in Wales 2022. The new curriculum will

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Final word count: 4863

be created and designed by teachers, early years practitioners and education staff. The new curriculum will include suitable learning techniques for different ages, abilities and aptitudes, this shows how every child is valued which is related to article 12 of the UNCRC, (Unicef, n, d). Also, the new curriculum will include the mandatory curriculum components of religion, values and ethics, relationships, welsh language ad sexuality education. This shows impact of diversity and equality for all children and in line with personal needs and lifestyles (HWB, 2020).

Part 3

For part 3 of this portfolio it will explore how a sociological factor can impact children's life experiences and development, and how practitioners and childcare staff can improve and support. The sociological issue that will be discussed is poverty, in more detail hunger, lack of food and nutrition due to income and relationships with and surrounding food.

Sociological factors are events or current lifestyle situations that can affect a child's development, these can include factors such as home life, e, g, single parent houses, poverty or low income, dramatic life changes such as death, new child, moving or divorce. For a child these factors can have a huge impact on all areas of development (Study Lecture Notes, 2020).

As childcare and early years practitioners, it is important to be aware of signs of children and families needing support. This is where early intervention is important in early years settings. The Early Intervention Foundation, (2022) states that early intervention is about taking immediate action when spotting an issue or problem that may affect a child and their families well-being or health, by taking action effectively it has potential to stop the problem escalating and becoming difficult to reverse. In part 3 it will be discussing and exploring the ongoing issue food poverty, it is important to recognise the whole picture. In a report carried out by Kellogg's (n, d) it was found that 2.4 pupils in every class in England and Wales arrive to school hungry at least once a week. As early years practitioners we are there to support this and find ways to improve these figures.

Theorist Maslow developed a model that expressed human needs in a hierarchical level, of what level of importance. These needs included physiological, safety, love

and belonging needs, and self-actualisation. Maslow argues that physiological needs are requirements for survival and without meeting these needs the human body cannot function optimally. Food and nutrition fall heavily into this category and are essential to support health and well-being as well as physiological needs (McLeod, 2007).

Food poverty is an escalating issue all around the UK and in Wales. Linking back to the UNCRC and understanding children's rights. Article 24 of the UNCRC states that children have the right to the best possible health and that Governments are responsible for providing quality health care, clean water, quality and nutritious food, and a clean environment and education on health and well-being (Unicef, n, d.) In 2018/19 food banks in Wales gave out 113,373 emergency food parcels, of which 40,793 went to children. Hwb (2019) stresses how food insecurity can cause high levels of stress and anxiety between families, this can cause arguments, depression and aggressive behaviours within the household. The effect of eating 'unhealthy' foods and lack of nutritious foods can affect children's overall behaviour. Ricketts, (2018) argues that children who consume unhealthy food regularly can struggle to concentrate, may become easily fatigued, irritable and more likely to face difficulties in school and learning. To overcome the struggle and stress that families face, the NHS set up a scheme, 'Healthy Start scheme' which supports new mothers, new parents and children up to the age of 4 in low income environments and families. This scheme supports by providing milk vouchers, vitamin supplements and fresh or frozen fruit and veg. The only negative to this scheme is that in Wales only 55% of families have accessed this scheme due to lack of knowledge, this could be improved by schools, nurseries, health sectors or early years practitioners promoting this scheme (Martin, C, and O'Neill, S. 2019).

The Welsh Government (2021), have supported this right by providing free school meals for children who need them. During the Coronavirus outbreak in 2020, funding was given by Welsh Government to provide food parcels or food vouchers for children and families eligible for free school meals. During the Covid-19 pandemic families were also offered and provided with food parcels for those children who need to self-

isolate or were unable to attend school due to covid-19 related barriers such as health conditions. The Welsh Government state, 'schools should work with catering teams or food providers to provide good quality lunch parcels.' This shows how schools are able to support pupils outside the classroom.

Another way that schools support healthy eating and families who may need the support is through afterschool clubs or cooking clubs within the community. It is important not to stereotype families and children living in poverty. When generally thinking of families in poverty many individuals may describe parents within these families to 'lack parenting skills', which most of the time is not correct. Wolff, (2021) argues that instead of focusing on the negatives and weaknesses of families in poverty, they should instead focus and engage the positive behaviours and personal lifestyles, Wolff, (2021) also goes on to argue how parenting level from families in poverty are the most loving and will tend to focus on time spent together and with the correct and appropriate support and resources are able to improve living circumstances such as income or nutrition.

Maholmes, (2014) agrees with this point by addressing that as practitioners and individuals working with and alongside children and families, it is important to identify and understand strengths within families in poverty instead of only focusing on deficits. By focusing on these it will help to understand and support needs for these families and then begin to focus and suggest ways to improve lifestyle by providing support and resources. Childcare practitioners or educational providers are responsible for the children in their personal care, within these settings, practitioners are likely to gain relationships with the children, parents and carers/families. With this in mind it is really important for individuals working in early years settings, have a care and compassion to help guide and support where they can. One way that schools support healthy eating and families who may need the support is through afterschool clubs or cooking clubs within the community, for example one company who support this is 'Cooking together Wales'. Cooking together wales, (n, d) is a charity run by qualified cooking teachers to support healthier living in Wales. They offer sessions in the community, workshops for pre-school and school environments, after school children and family

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Final word count: 4863

workshop and also professional training for early years practitioners. By having fun and exciting ways to help support families in poverty they are more likely to not feel embarrassed about attending sessions.

To Conclude, by recognising food poverty in early years settings and in the community, practitioners are able to make change and support families in need. Throughout this portfolio the topic, 'Catalytic Leaderships' has shown as early years practitioners who show catalytic leadership qualities and characteristics are more actively aware and want to make changes. As McDowall Clark (2012) states 'Change comes about through the recognition of new possibilities rather than being enforced for above.' Catalytic leaders make small yet effective changes in the setting and compassion and care for those around them.

Chelsey Parsons
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Final word count: 4863

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Lecturer: Paul Darby
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Chelsey Parsons
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