

Section 1

This section aims to critically analyze the significance of Inclusive Leadership in early years education drawing upon the opportunities, barriers and challenges involved in the role of an inclusive leader. Also emphasizing the effects, it has on children, their families and wider community.

Ferdman, Prime and Riggio (2021) cited in earlier times it was believed that people needed to adapt in order to normalize and be accepted, however; this strategy worked the opposite and resulted in isolation. Inclusive leadership allows individuals to accept their weirdness and consider it unique, promote innovation, creativity and productivity. Inclusive leadership assist inclusion, promotes the evolution of organizations and communities, diversifies society, promotes equity and social justice for collective advantage. Inclusive Leadership requires fully embracing the idea of inclusion, it offers a framework that makes it possible to address the complexities of diversity in more intricate, comprehensive, and useful ways. By using an inclusion lens, we can focus on the variety of the individual experience and identities while keeping intergroup ties, intercultural dynamics, and systemic processes. (Ferdman, Prime and Riggio, 2021). According to the Equality and Inclusion Strategy 2020-2024 by Cardiff Council, Inclusion involves reducing obstacles, promoting equality, utilizing variety, and ensuring safety. It requires accepting communities and cultures, and enables people to use their voices up, especially when they have alternatives on how things might be done better (Cardiff Council, 2020).

Inclusive leadership in educational settings has a profound effect on the quality of education as it is directly linked to the support provided, focuses on a child centered approach (Siraj and Hallet, 2016). According to Newstead and Isles-Buck (2012) in Early Year's settings inclusive leadership means providing high-quality childcare with a child-centered approach while being inclusive to all the children and adults in the setting, supporting them according to their individual needs. An inclusive leader fully understands the meaning of inclusion does not discriminate or favours anyone based on gender, race, socio-economic status and disability. It involves co-operating and coordinating with people with effecting communication, promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (Newstead and Isles-Buck, 2012). According to United Nations International Fund (No Date) disabilities are one of the most effecting barriers to children's education with around 240 million children with disabilities across the globe. An inclusive education system acknowledges the unique contributions of students from various backgrounds and enables different groups of children to thrive. It incorporates realistic opportunities for learning, especially for marginalized communities, including minority language speakers and children with disabilities. The simplest way to ensure that every child has an equal opportunity to learn is through inclusive education agreed by United Nation Convention on the Rights of a Child (No date) and Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act (2018).

The following situation has been encountered by an early year practitioner working in a school-based nursery in Wales. The scenario revolves around a four-year-old boy named Ali. Ali has recently arrived from Afghanistan fleeing war in line with UK Refugee Resettlement: Policy Guidance (2021), along with his father, mother and an older brother study in grade 5. The family is living in temporary accommodation near school . The father can understand some English, however the mother could not. The family seemed excited about the boys going to school and finding a sanctuary in Wales, however due to language barrier, grief and trauma from war, leaving their country, friends and family behind was still with them. Ali was struggling to stay without his mum in the nursery and kept crying for days. According to Hallet (2016)

The staff brought elder brother in the class few times to make him feel comfortable. Ali did not feel safe without his parents, not engaging with other children. After Covid- 19 the children were asked to bring their own snack, a piece of fruit and Ali was constantly missing on that staring other children while they eat. The staff was finding it difficult to convey the message to mum. After a few days Ali started to play on his own. in the nursery. After a couple of weeks Ali started to play on his hand sometime with other children, however the play he played was confrontational. He liked to play fighting games, making a pretend gun from wooden sticks, shooting other children and playing rough and speaking his native language. It was obvious that the boy had clearly witnessed the war. Due to the language barrier, it was difficult to communicate with parents, mother was already going through anxiety due to the uncertainty of their situation, unaware of the laws and financial crisis. Above all this, the practitioner noticed that Ali had been missing from the school while his elder brother was still attending the school regularly. When the practitioner asked the father, it was disclosed that Ali doesn't like to go to the nursery as he feels excluded and isolated. No one likes him, talks or plays with him and the teachers do not understand him.

Based on the scenario the first step of the practitioner was to invite the parents for a meeting where they feel comfortable and included. According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (No date) the authorities should respect parental views, rights and responsibilities. Similarly, according to LINC (2021) encouraging parental partnership should be an integral part of early year's education. Parents are the natural educators and experts of their child, starting from birth, a partnership between parents and practitioner allows to have a better understanding of children's needs and supports cognitive development. Working in partnership with parents allows the practitioner to get a deeper insight on child's life, religious, social, moral and cultural values (LINC, 2021). Similarly, Scanlan and Johnson also emphasized the importance of taking a holistic approach of building relationships with parents and how inclusive leadership based on equality extends beyond the doors of school (Scanlan and Johnson, 2020). The practitioner arranged a professional interpreter for the family to have an open and clear communication. As supported by the UK Government (2017) language is an essential component of communication, getting services from an interpreter can reduce the communication barrier. According to Raising Children (2021)

professionals are able to effectively communicate with parents with professional help from interpreters. Effective communication puts a practitioner in a good position to support families and develop effective intervention strategies.

In the current scenario the boy Ali clearly had experienced an Adverse Childhood Experienced by observing a war, death of near and dear ones, poverty, language barrier and migration. Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (2022) states that Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) have a close relationship with the ability to function effectively in later life. ACEs disrupt the normal functioning of brain, affect the immune system and mental health of a child, exposure to negative stress affects the child's decision taking ability and build healthy relationships. In the current situation the practitioner developed an intervention strategy while working with multiagency partnership to support the child and provide Therapeutic care. Hayes (2020) states children with adverse childhood experiences are most susceptible to adverse mental health issues. Therapeutic care provides children with a safe, calm, nurturing environment with a sense of belonging that allows children to build trust and relationships. It helps to minimize the symptoms of trauma and attachment disorder, finds an alternative approach to deal with behaviour issues (Hayes, 2020).

Furthermore, the practitioner encouraged parents to send Ali to school while the parent can stay with him for some time. The practitioner worked in partnership with a team of professionals including educational psychologists agreed by Welsh Government (2016) guidelines on Developing community partnerships and multi-agency working. The practitioner followed a child centered approach and followed the child's interest. This Aligns with the UNCRC (No Date) Article 12 respecting the views of the child, Article 13 freedom of expression and Article 13 recovery from trauma. The boy allowed to play freely while using praise and appreciation, positive behaviour reinforcements, reward charts and incorporation of cultural music as an effective behaviour management and engagement tool (Twinkl, 2023). Furthermore, the family was referred to flying start Parenting Offer, providing parenting support according to the families' individual needs (Welsh Government, 2017).

According to Gerritsen (2020) an inclusive leader is courageous, flexible, socially aware, believes in equality and fair treatment. In inclusive leader works in partnership devoted towards building relationships based on trust and mutual respect. A main aspect of an inclusive leader is to recognize the strength and weakness of the team and use it accordingly in favour of a shared objective. On the contrary, Ferdman (2017) stated Inclusive leadership is paradoxical in nature and contains various barriers and challenges in itself. Agreed by Gerritsen (2020) the main challenges faced by inclusive leaders are lack of shared vision as the parent of the boy would not necessarily agree with the professional opinion. The organizational procedures and policies that does not

align with the inclusive leadership as mentioned above the practitioner was willing to help the outside of the school doors and wanted to signpost the family to certain services but bound by the strict policies and procedure the practitioner is limited in own capacity. Another issue is lack of proper training and cultural awareness which also serves as a barrier in the way of inclusive leadership (Gerritsen, 2020).

To conclude this, the Early Year's Curriculum of Wales is a child-centered play-based curriculum that supports the idea of a unique child, promotes community engagement and multi-agency partnership. It is an inclusive curriculum that promotes inclusive education free from any form of discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, race, religion, culture and sexual orientation that supports the idea of inclusive leadership (Welsh Government, 2014).

Section 2Anti-racist Wales Action PI

According to Pollack Porter, Rutkow, and McGinty (2018), policy is defined as a legal binding, a set of principles or a standard course of action that should be complied with. Agreed by Centre of Disease Control and Prevention (2015), policies are regulatory laws set in place by government or private institutions for regulation of administrative procedures. Baldock, Fitzgerald, and Kay (2013) also suggested that policies are difficult to oppose or argue with, once they have been set by policy makers.

Furthermore, the UK Government (2022) states that policies are designed to develop or propose a solution to any problem or improve the quality of service provided. All the officials and service team should have a clear knowledge and understanding of the policies related to their area of work including any updates or amendments and what should be the desired outcome (UK Government, 2022).

Similarly, under the obligation of Equality Act (2010), Human Right Act (1998) the Welsh Government has developed an Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan (2022) to promote the well-being of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people. According to research conducted by the National Assembly for Wales (2019) education doesn't necessarily start from school but it starts from birth. The early years of a child's life set out the foundation of lifelong learning and development, any difficult experience such as poverty, racism, inequality could have a detrimental effect and on occasions falls behind the age of cognitive development impacting the adult life and social behaviour (Dallimore, 2019). Agreed by Bronfenbrenner Ecological System Theory states where a child grows has a major influence on their behaviour, personality and cognitive development (Bates, 2019a). Similarly, Banks theory on Ethnic Identity also emphasizes the importance of the role of educational settings in helping students to identify their cultural identity and creating an inclusive learning environment (Bates, 2019b). Therefore, Early Childhood Education and Care in Wales conceptualizes the idea of every child as unique and should be supported and encouraged to reach their full potential, supported by UNCRC (No date) and Inclusion and Pupil Support (2016).The Wales Anti-Racist Action Plan

(2022) aims to make a positive difference for current and for future generation of ethnic minorities with zero tolerance policy against racism, making Wales a fairer and stronger nation. Children and young people from ethnic minorities face racism on daily basis affecting the social, emotional and physical health resulting in lesser opportunities in education and work. The Welsh Government plans to review the progress every two years and aims to see a major difference by 2030. People from ethnic minorities usually have language barriers, are not sure about the solution, feel lack of support, knowledge and proper channel (Welsh Government, 2022).

According to Wales Anti-Racist Action Plan (2022) in past integration approach was used to tackle racism which involved ethnic minorities learning the language and ways of local life and integrating in the mainstream society which later developed into a new 'Multicultural' approach that involves ethnic people introducing and displaying their culture and asking for inclusion both did not work well. These were followed by the Equality Act 2010 and then Equality and Inclusion showed better results but did not work well due to historical imbalance of power. The new Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan (2022) aim to deal with racism by changing the organization structures, providing more opportunities to minorities and dealing with the issue by considering the real-life examples of ethnic minorities (Welsh Government, 2022).

Racism effects everyone however, people with authority are the most responsible for it. According to the Black Nursery Manager, an anti-racist early year's practitioner and inclusive leader explains we live in a racist society, racism is both traumatic and painful for a young child how it feels to be in a predominantly white setting. An inclusive leader is reflective in his practice, recognizes the issue and follows child's lead. Pemberton emphasized if one is not speaking against the racism then they are with the racism (Pemberton, 2021).

Earlier a multicultural approach was used to tackle the issue of racism involved ethnic minorities integrating in the mainstream society, involving their culture and ask for inclusion. However, this approach did not work well, followed by other approaches such as Equality act, Diversity and Inclusion were not showing major change due to historical imbalance of power. According to the new strategy it can only be tackled by changing the organizational structures, policies and incorporating real life experiences of ethnic minorities into consideration (Welsh Government, 2022).

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization aims to promote the inclusion and diversity in education this involves preventing all forms of marginalization, exclusion and inequality, promoting educators to understand the diversities in order to enhance the learning opportunities. It gives a centralized message 'Every learner matters and matters equally'. Similarly, Knight and Crick (2022) agreed that Wales is education system is undergoing a major change aiming towards inclusive education which focus on the needs of an individual learner flexible and adaptable nevertheless of their starting point (Knight and Crick, 2022).

In Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan (2022) the acronym BAME stands for 'Black Asian and Ethnic Minority' is being to categories ethnic minorities. However, Bunglawala (2019) criticized that using this acronym marginalize the white ethnic minorities of Gypsy and Roma travelers of Irish descent that are most disadvantaged communities. Furthermore, according to BBC (2020) people are already rejecting the term BAME as it feels misleading like a dispassionate understanding of different cultures, ignoring the individualized issue of each community and used as a safe word for others not to appear racist while still marginalizing them even more.

Similarly, Lane (2008) explained Racism is a part of inequality in early years settings racial equality mean a child feeling welcomed, appreciated, secure and having a sense of belonging. Educational exclusion is a result of intersectionality (UNESCO, 2008). Inclusive education mean working with children from diverse backgrounds including children with Special educational needs, from ethnic minorities, refugees (UNESCO, 2005).

Legislation plays an important part in tackling racism specially in early years setting. Finally, to conclude this the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan (2022) does have some weaknesses; however, it is a more inclusive approach provides inclusive leaders to develop their knowledge, skills on how to promote inclusion focusing on individual child's needs.

Section 3

Equality, diversity and inclusion are the main ingredients of the Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998. According to Evans (2007) inclusion is the process of identifying, recognizing and celebrating the differences and catering to their individual needs. According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (No date) every child should have equal opportunities free from discrimination regardless of their ethnicity, religion, language and abilities. In early years settings it is essential to promote inclusion right from the beginning which cannot be achieved without inclusive leadership. According to Siraj and Hallet (2013) in Early Year's settings inclusive leadership provides a sense of belonging, appreciation and a nurturing environment to all. This blog aims to promote inclusive leadership when working with children and families from ethnic minorities (Siraj and Hallet, 2013).

Scanlan and Johnson (2020) cited Inclusive leadership means navigating through the boundaries, removing barriers and bringing everyone together to the common interest. In current times due to high migration there is a diversity in population in terms of age, religion, gender, culture and abilities that brings diversity in the form of carers. Inequalities in education extend far beyond the educational settings and children leave some of their cultural identities in order to belong. The practitioners must create an

environment where diversity is recognized and celebrated for everyone to get equal opportunities to succeed, organizing institutional infiltration for community advancement. An inclusive leader leaves behind their own sociocultural views, strengthen their knowledge, skills and disposition to take a holistic approach to tackle the issue that involves working with families, community engagement and building productive relationship while being culturally sensitive (Scanlan and Johnson, 2020).

Around 18% of UK population belongs to ethnic minorities according to Inclusive Britain (2022), the Government aims to bring trust, promote fairness, encourage aspiration and achieve inclusivity. According to research conducted by Bunglawala (2019) explains BAME stands for Black Asian Ethnic Minority, so as mentioned in the name itself when we talk about minorities, we usually consider Black and Asian People disregarding the white ethnic minorities such as Roma and Gypsy travelers which are one of the most disadvantage and marginalized groups. We need to be considerate and shouldn't be using the terminologies that marginalize any group.

According to OECD (2015) immigrant students have different language, culture and socio-economically disadvantage which act as barrier in terms of academic achievement. Research shows that inclusive leadership allows children to feel included and appreciated which has a positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing resulting in better future outcomes.

According to research conducted by Allen, R. *et al.* (2021) a child's mind is like a sponge that absorbs knowledge and learns from its surroundings. In early years settings we have tomorrow's doctors, engineers, teachers etc., we need to make sure that today's children are not tomorrow's protestors. An inclusive early year's leader embraces the differences, promote anti-racist practices, allows children to ask questions and talk about their race, religion and culture to gain a better understanding of their cultural needs (Allen, R. *et al.* 2021). Furthermore, research conducted by Gocłowska *et al.* (2018) and Centre for Literacy in primary education emphasized the use culturally diverse learning resources including children's literature that depicts the images of ethnic minorities can promote inclusive education and leadership.

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