

Catalytic Leadership

Effective leaders, according to Priest and Middleton (2016), are people who inspire and influence others to attain a personal or group goal. A leader is someone who seeks to encourage others to engage in attaining continuous improvement for effective practise. A leader can be anyone who is responsible for others and is not necessarily in a specific function like a manager (Duggal, 2023). To conduct effective leadership, the practitioner can use catalytic leadership, which involves influencing both adults and children to make beneficial changes (Clark, 2012). According to Issah (2018) it is the responsibility of a catalytic leader to motivate and inspire people to support the change that practitioners see.

Ella Baker believes people that are strong and confident do not need a strong leader because she thought that the best way to influence change is to inspire and uplift others. To this end, she collaborated with others by incorporating transformative action together (Engler, 2020). A catalytic leader is someone who fosters curiosity and innovative thinking by cultivating a positive environment that includes mutual respect, trust and 'Psychological Safety' in accordance with McKinsey and Company (2012). Additionally, according to Heinen *et al* (2019) effective catalytic leadership delegated tasks in accordance with each practitioner's individual capabilities enables practitioners to use their skills as a member of the team and encouraging them to become confident in contributing within their setting. The catalytic leader can address this by evaluating individual responsibilities and implementing professional development (CPD) enhancing practitioners' understanding and knowledge through participation in activities such as training (CPD, 2020).

According to Ferdman and Deane (2014), CPD helps practitioners to raise the calibre of their work in line with ongoing exploration and growth of the most effective ways to scaffold children's learning. According to Bourke and Titus (2020), practitioners can actively improve the environment for children by successfully scaffolding them and addressing their specific requirements. Using catalytic leadership, the leader may scaffold both adults and children because it's their job to provide support that's tailored to each person's needs. This enables the leader to recognise the support tactics that will be most helpful to each person individually (Leyva, et al. 2015). According to

McLeod (2022), the Vygotskian theory emphasises the importance of understanding children's development areas to guarantee that each child receives individualised support because every child has unique abilities that need to be scaffolded by a more informed adult. According to Graham and Simon (2022) practitioners can benefit from the scaffolding provided by a more experienced person when it comes to the development and expansion of their own knowledge. fostering awareness of the fact that a catalytic leader's duty is to use, promote, and implement the learning theory during their leadership job in order to enable others to deliver CPD.

Furthermore, according to Ratzer (2023) a component of effective professional collaboration within development between practitioners that are leaders and teachers, could help teachers get a better understanding of a specific subject, is to consider teaching methods in new and different ways, and discover a fresh approach to use in the setting. This can help practitioners share their knowledge, understanding and experiences, enabling practitioners to feel represented, giving everyone the chance to be a catalytic leader. For practitioners, this might be challenging as they may not have the confidence to share their knowledge and their experiences with others since they may feel that their experience isn't sufficient or high enough according to Douglass (2019). However, this could be avoided by encouraging and motivating every practitioner, regardless of their backgrounds, to contribute because each practitioner has their own unique skill that will be helpful to the setting (Careers Wales, No Date). According to Hayes, O'Toole, and Halpenny (2017), the practitioner's engagement and interaction with the environment can have an impact on how they view the world and interact with others. This is discussed in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. Being inclusive is one of a catalytic leader's responsibilities since it makes sure that each practitioner and child feels represented and included in the setting, allowing everyone to participate fully and preventing practitioners from feeling excluded Nutbrown (2023). A welcoming environment encourages the development of constructive relationships and effective communication, which empowers others and acts as a catalyst for practitioners to work together and bring about positive change Kornhaber *et al.* (2016). Although it is important that all practitioners get along well, and they will inevitably differ. it is a practitioner's obligation to ensure that a relationship does not affect their practise when helping children and everyone within their setting (Welsh Government, 2015).

Additionally, according to Clark (2012), being professional and having ongoing engagement can encourage practitioners to become catalytic leaders who create neural connections by having a positive outlook and being receptive to fresh notions and ideas for successfully scaffolding children. According to Twinkl (No date) a practitioner with a growth mindset and openness can be open to expanding their practise by being receptive to material that questions their values and capacity for assisting children. A catalytic leader should, according to Clark (2012), ensuring practitioners feel valued because they should be considerate to other people's thoughts and opinions.

According to Cooperrider (2022) states a catalytic leadership is about ensuring others and encouraging them to act on change and improve a part of their lives. According to Day and Sammons (2014) empowerment gives practitioners the impression that they are improving the environment and the lives of the children, which makes them feel good and motivates them to keep working toward excellence and efficiency. Because they are more assured that others on their team are there to help one another, practitioners are more confident when contacting others during potential issues (Sennett, 2023). Therefore, practitioners may collaborate to address issues, which boosts each person's confidence as they contribute to finding answers and assigning responsibilities according to each person's skill (Douglass, 2019). Furthermore, as Day and Sammons (2014) believe, a leader should make sure they are using their leadership skills and have a positive attitude when helping others to become a catalytic leader. The catalytic leader should engage in CPD during a self-assessment to pinpoint areas for growth and increase their own knowledge while be aware of how their own actions as this may affect those around them.

Additionally, a good catalytic leader values other people's views and perspectives and acts to change things for better. As such, a catalytic leader can confidently ask others what they think they believe the other catalytic leader could improve on (Lancefield and Rangen, 2021). By critically evaluating oneself, a leader also demonstrates their desire to grow and become a better practitioner by demonstrating that they are open to receiving any helpful feedback (Clark, 2012). The catalytic leader may doubt their own talents as they consistently evaluate their skills, therefore this can make critically analysing oneself difficult (Lancefield and Rangen, 2021).

Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that it is equally crucial for the practitioner to recognise their areas of strength because doing so encourages them to engage holistically and lowers the risk of 'burnout' (Maslach and Leifer, 2016). A psychological disorder known as "teacher burnout" makes practitioners unable of practising at their highest level of effectiveness due to weariness, depersonalization, and diminished teacher achievement and self-worth (Xie, *et al.*, 2022). It is crucial to make sure that all practitioners are aware of both their own areas of strength and their areas for development (Maslach and Leifer, 2016). A practitioner should also make sure they set boundaries and engage in activities they enjoy rather than constantly concentrate on their employment role to reduce the danger of teacher 'burnout' (Tapp, No date).

Additionally, it can also be difficult for other practitioners, especially those who have become accustomed to certain events, to adopt new ways of thinking or methods. This can be a difficulty for practitioners who are catalytic leaders (Lovejoy, 2017). Change is inevitable, according to Miller, Noble and McQuillan (2022), but once it happens, people may not want to engage because they have grown accustomed to using certain techniques. However, as stated by Welsh Government (2012), the main reason why people may perceive change as frightening, is that they may lack knowledge on the subject. As a result, the catalytic leader must put strategies in place to increase practitioners and children knowledge before implementing the changes in order to help people adjust to change. Adopting something is less beneficial than changing it, as it prevents practitioners, a child, and families from becoming overwhelmed by it, because it may not be familiar to them. (Department for Education, 2017). To help adjust to change, the catalytic leader can also give them their own input on what should be altered and how it should be implemented. This will allow them to participate in the process of bringing about change (Centre for Creative Leadership, 2023). Wilmot, *et al.* (2019) suggests that by incorporating individuals who will be affected by the change, the catalytic leader may build a good, trusting relationship in which everyone feels valued while addressing the worries that everyone involved may have.

Physical Punishment

According to Roberts (2023), believes around the world, change is constant, and it is the duty of leaders to see to it that constructive change is backed up and carried out. Early childhood educators (EYPs) must assume the duty of acting as a catalyst for

change in child settings. A catalytic leader influences others rather than speaking with authority because motivation is more potent than unfavourable attitudes and dynamics. Every child should be given the chance to reach their full potential, as recommended by UNICEF (no date), with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (UNCRC) and stated by Donaldson (2015).

The Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020 new measure and the changes that have occurred to implement the new measure will receive most of the attention. The new law is being implemented to ensure that children have the same legal protection against violence as adults do, and that adults who hurt children will be held accountable (Welsh Government, 2022). According to the Welsh Government (2022) they claim that by doing this, children are protected from abuse. This shields children from problems that affect adults, such as assault. The United Kingdom (UK) is a part of the European court of human rights which is against all forms of punishment (Council of Europe, 2023). The UNCRC agrees with the Council of Europe (2023) children should be protected from all forms violence as stated in Article 9 (UNICEF, No date). Durrant and Emson (2012) believe prior to the adoption of the ban on corporal punishment, physical punishment of children was not only permissible but also promoted as a measure of discipline. Children were viewed as miniature adults. As discussed by Ansell (2021) physically punishing children for misbehaviour can have a long-term negative effect on their holistic development since it teaches them to resolve problems using physical aggressiveness. Physical punishment, according to World Health Organisation (2021) believes it may have the opposite impact of what is intended when it comes to correcting the child; they think it may raise the likelihood of aggression and lead to potential legal action for unlawful behaviour.

It is the Welsh government who has the responsibility to advance children's rights, ensuring their safety, according to the Children's Commissioner for Wales (2023). Wales implemented the Children's Commissioner for Wales Act 2001 to make sure these duties were fulfilled. The Children's Commissioner for Wales Act of 2001 was implemented to expand the breadth and depth of knowledge and grasp of those duties because the Care Standards Act of 2000 only touched the surface of a children's commissioner's responsibilities (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2023).

Furthermore, Swansea University (2008) discusses Peter Clarke, who was the first children's commissioner for Wales, he promoted Article 12 of the UNCRC on behalf of children because he thought children should not only have a voice, but also have their voice heard, listened to, and respected in all facets of their lives. Furthermore, Peter Clarke noted a problem with the police chiefs not paying attention to children who were reporting crimes, which led to children not wanting to report any crimes they may encounter and as it was believed to be an unfair judicial system (BBC NEWS, 2002). As stated by UNICEF (No date) this can impede Article 19 of the UNCRC from promoting the rights of children since it increases violent crime where children may still be impacted in families and communities.

Keith Towler, who was appointed as Wales's second children's commissioner in 2007, has concentrated on advancing children's rights because he thinks that without the Welsh Government's strong leadership, children may be in danger Welsh Parliament (2020). Children's Commissioner for Wales (2015) adds that during Keith Towler's term, he initiated inquiries and investigated possible child abuse in the 1980s that had not been looked into at the time. Furthermore, Keith Towler in accordance with CPS (2019) took to a multiagency approach to probe because he thought it should be a top priority to make sure the allegations were not ignored and the children who are now adults that were traumatised had the closure and justice in which the systems states.

The third children's commissioner for Wales, Sally Holland, took office in 2015. Throughout her time in office, she worked to ensure that children received the same level of protection as an adult would (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2018). According to Sally Holland, who is the Children's Commissioner for Wales, believes the Welsh Government is not committed to ensuring that children are given their rights and they are protected from harm in accordance with Article 19 of the UNCRC (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2018). The Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020 was consequently put into place in Wales in 2022. Children should be protected from violence and free from abuse of any kind (Welsh Government, 2023). However, the Welsh Government (No date, a) states adults could justify their actions which states children are not completely protected from violence. The new regulation ensures a child's protection by adopting a "legal defence of fair punishment," which would have previously allowed them to justify their actions by claiming they only shock or slapped the child.

The fourth commissioner for Wales Rocio Cifuentes came to Wales as a child as a refugee fleeing from Chile in the 1970s (Children's Commissioner for Wales (2023, a). Rocio Cifuentes represents the children within Wales and will do so over a seven-year period and will continue to fight for children's rights as she is aware first hand of the difficulties children may face in the modern times in accordance with the Children's Commissioner for Wales (2023). However, during Rocio Cifuentes current time as commissioner a smacking ban has been effectively put into place within Wales to ensure children have the protection, they may need giving children the same rights as an adult if they have be assaulted (Welsh Government, No date). Welsh Government (2023) believes the reason behind the measures of implementing is to ensure that every child is given right regardless to their personal circumstances and they are protected as stated within the UNCRC (UNICEF, No date). Furthermore, NSPCC (2022) states all physical punishment should be now forbidden, allowing for the protection of children from all types of violence and enabling each child to be safeguarded correctly with a much clearer awareness of what is expected of adults. Additionally, HM Government (2018) claims that as communities implement laws that detail, detailed expectations for adults to have with children, it gives communities confidence in their commitment to supporting children's rights.

Impact of the Coronavirus on Poverty

Economic poverty, which is particularly common because of the coronavirus epidemic, is one socioeconomic disadvantage that children may encounter (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2023). When people lack the essentials of life, they are in economic poverty. As a result, they may live in subpar conditions and eat poorly, which can make them regularly ill since they lack the necessities of life (Patel, 2020). Due to Covid 19 may families were affected, children would be affected with their health and well-being this is because low salary which made it difficult for families to eat and pay their bills, the lack of an education as schools were closed, or a lack of access social and community resources of which are all potential causes of poverty (Taylor, 2021). Welsh Government (2021) suggests that child poverty can lead to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) because of the circumstances in which children live or are exposed. As a result, practitioners have a duty to help children and families to lessen

the influence that ACEs have on them. According to Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust (2023), ACEs is a traumatic event that a child may experience. This could have an impact on the child for the rest of their life, affecting them socially and emotionally, and their wellbeing has a significant impact on how they may cope with challenges. According to the CDC (2022), poverty contributes to the development of ACEs because it exposes children to many unfavourable events at once. For instance, difficult financial circumstances, unhappy families, substandard housing arrangements, and a lack of exposure to safe places can all contribute to toxic stress.

Furthermore, the likelihood that these children would participate in risky behaviour, abuse drugs, have terrible relationships, and have a low education, it is likely that parents and other family members have also gone through ACEs (Steele, et al., 2016). The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2023) claims that the coronavirus pandemic caused an estimated 700,000 people to fall below the poverty line because of job losses, that 90% of people were furloughed at the time and paid minimum wage, and that there were not enough childcare facilities available for parents to leave their children while they went to work. A quarter of Wales's population was living below the poverty line prior to the epidemic, and the pandemic made their position worse. Many individuals and families consequently fell behind on their rent and utility payments, leaving them unable to access food and heat these are two fundamental human needs protected by the 1998 Human Rights Act. (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2023). As a result, there would be an increase in children during the coronavirus pandemic who had negative childhood experiences that might have an effect on their long-term development (Peditra, 2021). Welsh Government (2021) believes that in order to lessen the effects of the unpleasant experience, this impact should be acknowledged, and help should be developed for the low income homes, families, and the Children. One strategy to assist reduce the consequences that poverty has on children and their families, especially during the coronavirus epidemic, is the government-funded programme Flying Start, which aims to lessen the impact on families and children who live within a low-income area (Welsh Government, 2017).

Flying Start is supports the children by giving them access to many possibilities for to enhance their learning, which are provided by practitioners (Carmarthenshire Family Information Services, 2023). Every practitioner working in the Flying Start programme has received specialised training in identifying children's potential extra learning needs

(ALN) (Welsh Government, 2014). According to Early Intervention Foundation (2023) early detection of potential ALN enables practitioners to intervene early to guarantee that children's development is not slowed down or begins to regress due to their ALN. Also, according to NHS England (2015), early identification reduces developmental delays because children who receive a diagnosis too late may find it difficult to cooperate and interact, but if they receive the individualised care they require, they can be treated fairly. The Vygotskian theory emphasises how important it is to make sure that children are scaffolded and that the people around them are aware of their particular needs and talents since doing so allows for a child-centred approach and guarantees that the child's demands are satisfied by an experienced adult. (McLeod, 2023).

According to Liu (2012), inexpensive housing for people in poverty typically has a dangerous environment in the neighbourhood because the parks and areas around aren't consistently cleaned, maintained, or examined for hazardous materials and are therefore inappropriate for children to play alone outside. Flying Start seeks to give children access to safe environments and opportunities that they might not otherwise have in their homes or communities. For instance, many people living in poverty might not have access to a back yard or a park where they can play without fear of being attacked (Welsh Government, 2014). By providing children with secure environments to explore and engage in self-discovery, which, according to Piaget and Montessori, is more beneficial for children who are engaged in hands-on learning and have better experiences, children's development can be improved holistically. (Twinkl, No date). According to Raising Children Network (2023) hands-on learning helps children develop resilience and complex thinking abilities because it lets them learn by doing rather than by being told how to do something. It also lets them make mistakes and understand how to overcome challenges they may encounter.

Furthermore, supporting the parents and families of the child is a responsibility of Flying Start practitioners, and working together and helping the parents ensure that their child has access to the best chances. (Welsh Government, 2017). Additionally, practitioners are aware that ACEs may have affected the children's families during their formative years and that this is a possible cause of the children living in poverty (Welsh Government, 2021). In order to support parents, Flying Start practitioners will build a strong relationship with parents since mutual trust encourages participation

and communication throughout the programme (Welsh Government, 2017a). Therefore, practitioners would pay attention to parents inputs, encouraging them to participate in activities that will advance their knowledge and skills, and integrate many agencies into the environment to offer the parents individualised support (Ceredigion County Council, 2023). Due to the coronavirus epidemic, it can be challenging for Flying Start practitioners to interact with parents and children effectively since they must follow government rules for preventing and lowering coronavirus cases (Carmarthenshire Family Information Service, 2023). Flying Start overcame this obstacle by releasing an app that allowed practitioners to continue supporting children and families during the pandemic by utilising multi-agency strategies, children's activity books, continual parent communication, and notifying parents of available activities and groups which they are able to join to help their child develop (Welsh Government, 2017).

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