Inclusive Leadership

What is Inclusive Leadership?

According to Bourke and Titus (2020) an inclusive leader is to have the ability to sympathize and empathize whilst not being bias to certain individuals or situations. Devarakonda (2021) agrees with this as they also say that inclusive leaders should treat people fairly and impartially whilst always being respectful. Additionally, Jones (2020) says that to be inclusive, one must be able to see everything in 3D, that there is more going on behind the scenes. Furthermore, to be an inclusive leader it is what the impact of the leader does to help and support the individuals or groups of people not what they intend to do (Jones, 2020). Learning for Justice (2016) also says that an inclusive leader should be able to bring everyone from diverse backgrounds and support them to come together and work together. Additionally, O'Boyle (2020) supports this by saying that being diverse, which is to learn, communicate and have contact with people who are from diverse backgrounds and cultures, helps people realise that being classed as dissimilar to the norm is not problematic or should be taken as a threat. Furthermore, O'Boyle (2020) says that when people are involved with diversity more often this will hopefully allow them to build up the ability to be more inclusive in the future and gain a vaster perspective of the world around them. Dennison (2021) says that to become an inclusive leader, the ability to entrust people, utilise people's strengths, and be self-aware of personal biases and be able to adapt to the requirement of understanding others own personal beliefs. Additionally, Dennison (2021) says a leader with unconscious bias is more able to see any biases in the group and is more adept at accommodating the concerns.

Why is Inclusive Leadership important?

According to Ferdman and Prime and Riggio (2021, p. 38) Inclusive leadership is important, as it allows a variety of different subjects such as organisations, communities, and people whether they are individual or in groups, find solutions to predicaments and problems that occur. O'Boyle (2020) says that when a leader is aware of the back story or the history of the problem, they can support the team or individual to their full potential. Department of Health and Social Care (2022) supports this as it says that to be successful in a group or team, having a leader who is inclusive will help, support and guide to reach this outcome. Dennison (2021) says that an inclusive leader will have the ability to ask questions if they do not know the answers, this will allow them to understand the situation and be able to educate themselves.

Also, Randel *et al.*, 2018) says that when individuals or group members are in an environment that they feel at ease in and know that their opinions are worth the same as everyone else, and they are respected, they will be more proactive and strive to achieve the best of their ability. However, according to Weiss *et al.* (2018) earlier studies showed that leaders are only recognised by their status, also not allowing those of a lower status to voice their own opinions about ideas or solutions to problems. However, Weiss et al. (2018) says that when an inclusive leader starts using wording and language such as (WE, US, OUR) this can allow every team member to feel just as important as the next person and that their voice is just as important. Theoharis and Scanlan (2020) support this by saying that all children and young adults of should be recognised as equal whatever their age, gender, ethnicity, and culture are, as it is their right. United Nation International Children Emergency Fund [hereafter UNICEF], (2019) supports this in article 2 of the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child [hereafter UNCRC], which says that each individual child has rights regardless of their ethnicity, religion, gender, or any other background. Also, Early Years Alliance (2019) says that every child has the right to feel included and be on equal status as everyone else. When this does not happen, this can influence the children's holistic development and may affect their future development.

By using the scenario below, this assignment will investigate how inclusive leadership can support children, staff, and communities in making sure that equality and diversity is being utilised.

Scenario

A young boy aged three years old, who is a migrant from Syria has started in an early year setting. It has been noticed that the child is upset and cries when entering the nursery and the child does not play with the other children. The child's mother is a single parent who is incredibly quiet and stands alone at drop off and pick up times. The practitioner when asked about this situation responded with excuses such as there is no time to deal with it and is too busy.

Child – the young boy

As the child in the scenario is from a country where there is a war happening, this could have repercussions on the child. The child could be feeling scared, frightened, and suffering from post-traumatic stress. Then suddenly arriving at a new country where no one speaks their language or looks familiar, and he has no friends here. Also to be placed into a new foreign school that is strange and to be taken away from their only parent for six hours a day. The inclusive leader needs to address these issues in a sensitive manner, as from a child's point of view these situations are huge.

Vassallo (2024) says that in the year 2019 there was eighty million people have moved from one area of the world to another and forty percent of that consisted of children under the age of eighteen. When this happens, these children are faced with challenges not only in the classroom but also in their health and wellbeing and cultural needs (Vassallo, 2024).

The Inclusive leader will recognise that the child needs a lot of nurturing and support about how important they are and how their culture and /or religion is admired and respected (Lane, 2008). This is supported by Flying Start Childcare Guidance (Welsh Government, 2023) and article 6 of the UNCRC (UNICEF, 2019) which says that all children must have a positive start in their lives and have a right to be educated with the required support that is needed.

In the scenario it says that the young boy cries on entering the setting this could be down to being separated from his mother. Theorist John Bowlby, believed that attachment is a

relationship between a child and their innate need for the feeling of safety and security with a person that they have a connection with (O'Connor, 2018). Additionally, Collier (2015) says that in research carried out by Doctor C Suarez-Orozco found that immigrant children who are separated from their parents met a greater level of anxiety and depression. However, to try to overcome this the inclusive leader could put on extra transition days for the child and mother to visit the setting as this will help the separation anxiety that the child might feel (O'Connor, 2018). Additionally, (Bristol Early Years, 2022) also says that children who have extra needs or requirements may require extra transition days. Furthermore, Welsh Government (2022) says that for the child to have a sense of belonging, using his past and present experiences from his home environment and community will help achieve this. Also, the language barrier between the child and the practitioner and the other children can be a problem. To solve this the inclusive leader can contact the local authority which can help with this matter or companies such as the Wales Interpretation and Translation Services. Furthermore, the inclusive leader can make sure that the child when in school has a translating devise that is simple enough for the child to use or and place a 1 to 1 with the child that speaks the native tongue which will help the child feel more involved. Additionally, this is supported by Silverstein (2024) who says that when a child can connect through language, their entire world expands into finding out about the diverse cultures there are. For the young boy to feel more at ease in the early years setting, he needs to feel a sense of belonging. Souto-Manning *et al.,* (2021) says that belonging is a basic need and has been associated with health and wellbeing, which in turn influences cognitive and socioemotional development. National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum [hereafter NALDIC], (2024) support this as they say enabling adults and effective environments are fundamental to support migrant children. Having these factors in play and to have a sense of belonging which will promote the development of their language, communication skills (NALDIC, 2024).

Parent – Single Mother

In the scenario above. The mother is seen to be isolated from the other parents/ carers at morning drop off and when school finishes. The mother might be suffering from shock and post-traumatic stress as she may have lost her husband or partner in the war and had to escape as quickly as possible. She might have lost other family members too. Also, as she is new to the community she might not trust the government here and thus the school. There could be money problems such as poverty, this might be another reason they fled their homeland.

In this situation the inclusive leader needs to make the mother and young boy feel as welcome as possible (Welsh Government, 2023). As the mother may not speak the local language it is imperative that the inclusive leader is able to communicate with the mother at any level. (Brodie and Savage, 2015) says that the inclusive leader should make sure that any information that sent out to the mother is translated into their own language which includes any written forms and emails. The inclusive leader should contact the local authority to enquire about translating devices also plan meetings with the mother, the English as an Additional Language Co-ordinator [hereafter EAL], and the practitioner so that they are all in agreement of what the strategies are (Brodie and Savage, 2015).

As the mother is always alone, the inclusive leader can investigate the nationalities of other parents or carers that come to the early year setting. If the mother can communicate with someone else quite like her, she will start to feel a sense of belonging. Scanlan and Johnson (2021) says that bringing together people from unfamiliar cultures and backgrounds helps them unite and form a relationship which future ideas and goals can be carried out. Scanlan and Johnson (2021) says that these relationships are devised on what is called social frontiers. However, Scanlan and Johnson (2021) say that this might be hard to achieve as the mum will not see the other parents that often. So, to overcome this barrier the inclusive leader must look further outside the early years setting gates and into the local community. Also, if this course of action does not lead anywhere, the inclusive leader can suggest to these parents the use of an empty room or hall in the school. Evangelou *et al.* (2011) says that the idea of these rooms is to

support the parents and carers in feeling a sense of belonging and welcome in a safe place. This is also a wonderful opportunity for the inclusive leader to find out more about the mother and the other families and offer advice and information that is needed (Evangelou *et al*., 2011). Also, the inclusive leader can also find out and share with the parent what government funding is out there to help the mother out, if she is finding it hard to cope because of coming from a poverty background. Welsh Government (2023) and Local Authorities such as Carmarthenshire County Council (2024) have information about grants and funding which might help the mother. The inclusive leader can also help the mother to fill in the forms or speak to the relevant people on behalf of her, like an advocate.

Practitioner

In the scenario the practitioner has been portrayed as having no time to help and support the young child, this might be due to the increased workload that all educators and practitioners are forced to deal with daily. Also, the practitioner might not fully understand the situation that the child and parent is in. The practitioner could be unsure on how to continue with supporting the family as there has been no relevant and right training been done and is wary of saying and doing the wrong thing.

Vassallo (2024) says that children who are from countries that are at war are susceptible to an increased risk of developing mental health conditions, post-traumatic stress, and anxieties. Having these conditions will have detrimental effects on their learning and education (Vassallo, 2024). However (Vassallo, 2024) and (Welsh Government, 2023) says that inclusive leaders can have a positive impact on the educators and practitioners in their settings by being supportive and have the relevant training that is needed. Furthermore, (Welsh Government, 2023) says that young children require a nurturing environment which is safe and is a place where they feel secure in. Childhood Education International (nd) supports this by saying inclusive leaders should support educators and practitioners by providing the necessary tools such as training courses that is needed. Also supplying resources and equipment if budgets allow (Childhood Education International, nd). Additionally, (Welsh Government, 2023) also says that any staff that work with children should have the most relevant and up to date training and qualifications. Devarakonda (2020) says that the practitioner should be able to understand the background of the child and support him in his holistic development. To do this the inclusive leader needs to discuss with the practitioner to see how aware they are of the child and parent's background story (Devarakonda, 2020). With the inclusive leader's guidance and support the practitioner can adapt the setting to be a place that is welcoming to all the child (Marautanga, 2016). This will help the child feel safe and show the other children and they then will be able to understand better (Marautanga, 2016). Which in turn promote the holistic development of the young boy.

Policies

What are policies?

Policies are documents that are drawn up by organisations such as a government body, a company, or an individual setting (Baldock and Fitzgerald and Kay, 2013). World Economic Forum (2015) says that there are two different types of policies, micro and macro policies. Even though they are different types of policies, (World Economic Forum, 2015) says they both achieve the same goals. A micro policy is more suited to smaller companies such as business and school settings and a macro policy is more suited to larger institutes such as government legislations and politics (World Economic Forum, 2015).

These policies will explain how procedures will be dealt with, for example, a school's complaint policy or a health and safety policy (Baldock and Fitzgerald and Kay, 2013). Also, a policy can explain how in the future how particular approaches and plans will happen, for example, if there is funding set up to support an early year setting, the policy can explain how the monies will be raised and how it will be spent Baldock and Fitzgerald and Kay (2013).

Yang (2014) says that policies are written by the companies or governing bodies that will be represented by them. However, it is important to make sure that these policies are written out fairly and inclusively as sometimes, the people in charge who write them, can come across as quite forceful and opiniated (Baldock and Fitzgerald and Kay, 2013).

To explain policies in greater detail, I have chosen a micro policy from a school setting. The policy is a school complaints procedure policy, this was created by the setting. The policy does not seem to be inclusive, as the school's name is the primary object to protect (Johnstown Primary School, 2013). However, in parts of the policy, there are references to all complainants

have the right to be heard which is supported by the UNCRC (UNICEF, 2019) and (Parentkind, 2024). Parentkind (2024) say that parents, carers, and other adults who have responsibility for a child should be involved on several elements in children's education, such as policies, curriculum, homework, and discipline. Committee on Education and the Workforce (2024) support this as they advocated for the Parents Bill of Rights Act (2023) to pass, which allows the parents to have knowledge, voice and when schools update any policies. However, this is only implemented in the United States of America, it has unfortunately not made it to the United Kingdom yet.

Also, in the school's complaint policy (Johnstown Primary School, 2012) it says that when a child has made the complaint, an adult can represent the child which is inclusive as they are thinking of the child's needs and limitations. However, this opposes article 14 in the UNCRC (UNICEF, 2019), which says that governments should recognise the rights and responsibility of the parent/carer when they advise and support their child as they mature. Also, if an adult has put in a complaint against the school, the adult is allowed to bring a relative or friend to support them, but they are not allowed to speak for them as they are assumed that they can speak for themselves. (Parentkind, 2024) says that this is not being inclusive as the school is being presumptuous by assuming that the adult can speak out. Additionally, National Health Service (2023) says that this could be from nervousness and anxiety from when the adult themselves were younger, from their own childhood experiences in school. Furthermore, Social Anxiety is a common problem that needs to be treated by professionals (National Health Service, (2023). Also, it says in the complaints policy quite often that any aggressive behaviour by parents will not be tolerated and that staff are to be treated politely and respectfully (Johnstown Primary School, 2012). This is considered as inclusive initially as the staff's health and wellbeing is being considered. However, Kramer (2019) says that this singling out certain people is called labelling, this in turn can cause more problems. Additionally, Kramer (2019) says that when labelling starts it limits the desirity of knowing what that person is really like, as a judgement has already been made.

Furthermore, in the school's complaint policy (Johnstown Primary School, 2012) it says that if it is a child who wishes to put in a complaint, the child must go to a member of staff to do it. Gillett-Swan and Sargeant (2017) says this is not being inclusive to the child because the policy is not allowing the child the freedom to choose who they might feel safer with and have more trust in them to help them. The UNCRC (UNICEF, 2019) says in article 12, every child has the right for

their own views and thoughts to be always considered. This is also supported by article 13 of the UNCRC (UNICEF, 2019) which says that every child has the right to express their own beliefs. Gillet-Swan and Sargeant (2017) also say that when children feel restricted on certain levels this will have a negative impact on the child's holistic development. However, Welsh Government (2020) says that educators need to be empathetic to children to support them to understand and recognise when they need help. Additionally, Welsh Government (2020) says that when children learn this skill, they will be more aware of how decisions and situations can affect others around them.

Additionally, throughout the complaints policy (Johnstown Primary School, 2012) the type of wording that is used is (TRY, MAY, MIGHT NOT HAPPEN). These types of words do not specifically guarantee that any complaints will be solved. Eisen (2020) says that these types of words are troublesome as they are unclear even though they come across as being less demanding and more inclusive. Additionally, Eisen (2020) says that these types of words mean that it may be allowed and lack clarity which could cause future problems.

In conclusion, this complaints policy is very much on the side of the school, the wording at the start of the policy is quite loud and dictating, so I would imagine any parent or carer reading that and being quite frightened to carry on. The policy is quite dated now, so I think it would be time to revise and update the policy.

Blog

Inclusive Leadership in Early Year Setting

(Bright Horizons, 2020)

These settings are important for our children as here they will become more aware of their environment, so it is crucial to provide a setting that it promotes equality and diversity. The Un Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UNICEF, 2019) supports this by saying that each child has a right to an identity and their own views and beliefs on cultures.

So, how can we do this?

We need to look around our settings with an unbiased eye and note what can be done to achieve this. We need to provide resources that the children who come to our setting can connect with, these can include a wide variety of items such as, toys, pictures, games and books. Prospero Teaching (2023) and Early Education (2021) support this as they say settings should be a place full of materials that support children in their diversity and equality journey.

In nearly every early year setting I have been into, there are always books, but unfortunately there are the usual English or Welsh books. In our present day, our early year settings are becoming more diverse in the different cultures that we welcome through our doors, and I think we need to celebrate that in a more prominent way.

(The Responsible Business Network, 2024)

So, how can we promote diversity and equality using something simple as books in an early year setting?

When children are read stories or even when they just look at the pictures, their imagination starts to work. They enter a world of make believe, and this.....

- This helps the children see the world from the eyes of the other children in the setting (Birth to 5 Matters, nd)
- Make the children curious about different cultures and religion (Welsh Government, 2022).
- Books promote imagination in children which in turn supports their cognitive development (Birth to 5 Matters, nd).

When children are read stories, they start to imagine themselves as that character in the book. Garces-Bacsal (2020) agrees as research in a study showed that children are seen to identify as characters in books, this helps the children to be able to increase their knowledge, social and emotional learning abilities.

These books should consist of stories that the children can find it easy to relate to, for example: stories that have

- A range of different family circumstances – stepfamilies, parents of the same sex, one parent families.
- Various ethnic and cultural backgrounds in everyday circumstances.
- Children and adults with disabilities, whether physical or learning disability that is not noticeable by sight.
- Both men and women being equal in the home and at work.
- Books that are written in the native tongue of the children and the primary language of the setting.

When you put these books in your early year setting, and they are easily accessible by the children, a whole new world will open to them and will support them to grow more confident in themselves (Picton and Clark, 2022).