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Section 1

The purpose of this section is to provide a critical evaluation of catalytic leadership and how the challenging nature of leading and managing early provision ensures that the early year's workforce is equipped to meet the complex demands of society, sociological factors, and any issues that may impact a child's life throughout the early years. Firstly, I will begin by providing a brief description of what leadership is. The meaning of leadership is imprecise and complicated, and there are numerous definitions available. Leadership has evolved into an all-encompassing concept that is difficult to define. It is beneficial to think more precisely about the activities of a leadership team (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012). A similar statement can be made about the meaning of leadership development, given that any underlying assumptions and perspectives have consequences when it comes to the promotion of various approaches within organisations (Mabey, 2013; Van Velsor et al., 2010). People's perceptions, values, and priorities about leadership development are influenced by how they speak and write about it (Carroll, 2019; Mabey, 2013). Examining the beliefs and implicit assumptions of different stakeholders about the central elements of leadership development processes, which is framed as studying implicit leadership development theory, is a promising area of research in leadership development (Vogel et al., 2020). Catalytic leadership can look like. Catalytic leadership has been described by Jim Whitehurst in his recent book The Open Organization as a leader that builds on inspiring and enabling with their attention to earning the right to lead and encouraging without judging rather than attempting to maintain their authoritative status, McDowall Clark (2012) asserts that a catalytic leader in early childhood is there to serve as a role model and to influence children. According to Colmer (2017), leadership is a form of influence that encourages people to participate in shared and collective goals. Also, Teachers who are catalytic in nature are frequently regarded as leaders in their own right within the pedagogic profession. They frequently share their insights with other teachers; they participate in distributed leadership when opportunities arise within the school context; they are trailblazers in the fields of learning and teaching practice; and they have both internal and external credibility, depending on the situation (Luke,1998). Catalytic leadership can be noticed from other forms of leadership styles as they are often more physical traits, a catalytic leader can often be seen displaying high energy while being supportive, forward-thinking mentors who spark action in the people around them while it is defined as a leadership style it is not like the other conventional leadership styles such as authoritarian which is a one-dimensional dimensional approach (Siraj,2003). The catalyst leader can adapt various aspects of the conventional leadership styles such as authoritarian Leadership, Participative Leadership, Delegative Leadership, Transactional Leadership, Transformational Leadership. Although being a catalytic leader has multiple benefits there are factors that can affect the performance of a catalytic leader (Crosby, 2005). One major factor can be self-confidence, because of the nature of a catalytic leader the person that wishes to use this approach must have a high level of confidence and their ability to lead by example while remaining focused on the desired outcome and what is expected of them in order to be effective as a leader. To be a successful leader, the practitioner who wishes to use this method must have a high level of self-confidence and the ability to lead by precedent while maintaining their focus on the task at hand (Working Differently, 2013). Teachers who are confident in their abilities can improve their overall effectiveness as well as their own personal well-being. Unfortunately,

students can pick up on a teacher's lack of confidence very quickly, which can lead to difficulties in maintaining control of the classroom (Silcox, 2017). Also, a leader that lacks confidence will be less likely to expose themselves to innovative approaches which could open new challenges. This can have an impact on children as they often see teachers as role models and if a child sees a confident energetic teacher, they are likely to become ambitious learners and have high expectations for themselves. Also, Teachers are important role models for their students, and their attitudes, values, and behaviors can be influenced by them. Having a positive role model serves as an example for children, encouraging them to lead meaningful lives. In a child's life, teachers are a constant source of guidance and support. They have as much, if not more, influence over children than do their parents do (Clark,2012). Having a catalytic leader can ensure children have the best support as catalytic leaders are known for being able to co-operate with other organisations and create a support network for children and their families which can aid them if they encounter any sociological issues (Parker,2020). The most common sociological factors children will experience are Poverty, health and well-being, cultural and ethical beliefs and life with lone parents. A child is considered to be growing up in poverty if they live in a household with an income that is 60 percent below the national average (median) income for the year in question. A child living in poverty can have lifelong effects on them as child poverty increases the likelihood of a wide range of health problems in children, including poor nutrition, chronic disease, and mental health difficulties (Mujis, 2004). As a result of poverty, families are put under additional stress, which can result in parental mental health and relationship problems, financial difficulties, and substance abuse. The well-being of children and young people means that they are safe, comfortable, happy, feeling good about themselves, and ready to learn and develop. It's essential that children live and are taught in a safe and stable environment in order to ensure sound well-being development. And sometimes that is not the case as children sometimes get exposed to certain things which affect their health and wellbeing (Ehin, 2012). A catalyst leader can form a connection between the child and their families with an organisation that specialises in that area such as health counselors. Parent separation can also have an impact on a child's wellbeing, and they might need support this is where a catalyst leader can intervene and provide support by contacting teams around the family which is an organisation that deals with family matters and keeps the child's interest in mind prior to making any decision(Luke,1998).

Section 2

Throughout this section, I will provide a comparative and critical exploration of how children`s rights and the appointment of the children's commissioners across the UK have impacted children's early childhood. Firstly, Who is the Children's Commissioner for Wales, and what is his or her role? With effect from April 2015, Sally Holland has served as the Children's Commissioner for Wales. Her duties include explaining why children's rights are so important, as well as investigating how decisions made by public bodies in Wales, such as the Welsh Government, impact on those rights. The Commissioner is appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and operates as an independent corporation, sponsored by the Department of Education and funded by the Department of Education. The Commissioner's primary responsibility is to promote and protect the rights of children across Wales (Freeman,2009). The

Children's Commissioner for Wales Act 2001, which amended the Care Standards Act 2000, establishes the Commissioner's responsibilities. In his or her official capacity, the Commissioner's primary goal is to protect and promote the rights and welfare of children. While carrying out her duties, the Commissioner's primary goal must be to protect the public (Strehmel,2016). In addition to having statutory powers and regulations, the Children's Commissioner's Office is a national, independent organisation. In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Commissioner has a legal obligation to promote and protect the rights of all children in Wales and England (UNCRC). It is through her advocacy that policymakers and those who have an impact on the lives of children and young people are more likely to take their perspectives and interests into consideration when making decisions about them. The Children's Commissioner, who is independent of the government and of Parliament, has unique powers to assist in bringing about long-term change and improvements for all children, particularly those who are most vulnerable. In order to do so, she must first gather evidence, which includes talking to children and young people and requesting information from public institutions. She then conducts research and compiles information on a wide range of issues that affect the lives of children and young people. She serves as the 'eyes and ears' of children in the system and throughout the country, and she is expected to carry out her responsibilities 'without fear or favour' of the government, children's agencies, and the voluntary and private sectors, among other things. In addition, she offers guidance to children who are in or leaving foster care, who are living away from home, or who are involved with social services through her advice line, Help at Hand. When it comes to advocating for children's rights, the Welsh Government has set the bar high. A commitment to the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child underpins this approach (UNCRC) (Clark,2003). An international agreement outlining children's rights, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a treaty that was signed in 1989. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is based on the premise that children's rights require special consideration due to the special care and protection that children and young people frequently require. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is a list of rights that all children and young people, everywhere in the world, have. Children and young people under the age of eighteen have the right to be safe, to play, to receive an education, to be healthy, and to be satisfied with their lives.

There are four key articles in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child that serve as the foundation for the rights outlined in the document:

- A commitment to the best interests of the child (article 3)
- A right to life, survival, and development (article 6)
- A right to be heard (article 12)
- A right to non-discrimination (article 2)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was formally adopted by the Welsh Government as the basis for policy making relating to children and young people in 2004. (REF). The Children Act 2004 is a development of the Children Act 1989, which was

passed in 1989. It reaffirmed that all individuals and organisations who work with children have a responsibility to assist in the protection and promotion of the welfare of children.

The guidelines set out in this act enable anyone working with children in an educational or non-educational setting to understand how a child should be cared for in the eyes of the law, regardless of their position in the organisation.

The ultimate goal of this Act is to make the United Kingdom a safer place for children, and it has allowed for the establishment of a Children's Commissioner as well as the requirement for each local authority to appoint a director of children's services. The government can also create electronic records for every child in England, Scotland, and Wales. This makes it easier to track down children across multiple local authorities and government departments(Cook,2010).

The Act's guiding principles consist of:

- Allowing children to be healthy is important.
- Encourage children to be happy and to take pleasure in their lives.
- Providing children with the ability to remain safe in their environments
- Aiding children in their endeavors Contributing to the attainment of economic stability for the children's future.
- Contribute to making a positive difference in the lives of children.

One of the primary areas of concern addressed by the act is the well-being of children. The main section of the Act that most people will be familiar with is the section dealing with child maltreatment and the requirement for those who suspect child maltreatment to report their findings to the appropriate authorities. The Act also addresses the establishment of Children's Trusts. These are organisations that have been formed on their own initiative and are not necessarily affiliated with the Department of Health and Social Services or other government agencies. Its goal is to foster cooperation and relationships between these two groups, as well as between them and teachers, parents, or guardians, who may not always welcome outside intervention or sources of information. A fund has also been established as a result of this Act, which is intended to assist those who are in disadvantaged financial circumstances in escaping poverty and financial hardship. Its goal is to assist children ages 5 to 13 in maintaining their school attendance.Even though all of these issues are covered by the Children Act, the primary and most important goal is to ensure and provide the highest possible level of care and protection. When it comes to the welfare and protection of children, the interests of the child are paramount, and anyone who works with children bears this responsibility.

<u>Section 3</u>

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(Smartcitymemphis, 2012)

During this section, I will aim to provide a critical evaluation of the early interventions and services that are in place to support children and a specific sociological aspect that impacts children and their life experiences. Firstly, I will begin by providing a brief description of what poverty is, Poverty is defined as not being able to afford to heat your home, pay your rent, or purchase the necessities for your family. It entails waking up every day to insecurity, uncertainty, and the inability to make difficult financial decisions. It implies that you will be marginalised – and even discriminated against – as a result of your financial circumstances. The constant stress that it causes can result in health problems that prevent people from being able to participate fully in society (Joeseph Roundtree Foundation, 2022). There has also been a government-backed strategy which is the Child Poverty Strategy for Wales. The strategy outlines a vision and goals for Wales, and it places a strong emphasis on the rights of children. The Strategy also includes 5 key aims and those were:

1. aiming to see a significant reduction in the number of children living in families where no one works.

2. Assist parents and young people in developing far more advanced skills that will enable them to obtain better employment opportunities.

3. All children and young people to have the same opportunities and chances, and we don't want anyone to be held back because of their financial circumstances. It is especially critical that we do more to assist people in achieving better health and educational outcomes than they currently do.

4. To ensure that the economy of Wales is as strong as it possibly can be, resulting in the creation of more well-paid jobs.

5. To assist families living in poverty by providing them with debt and financial advice, ending the 'poverty premium', and alleviating the problems caused by changes to the benefit system.

By working in accordance with the strategy the government aimed to irradicate poverty in Wales. However, currently, Wales` poverty rate stands at an all-time high as Wales has the highest poverty rates of the four regions of the state, with nearly one in every four people living

in poverty in the country's capital. Even worse, Wales has one of the highest rates of child poverty in the world, with 31 percent of its children living in poverty. One major factor for the current poverty crisis is the recent pandemic which caused hundreds of thousands of people to lose their jobs or be affected negatively financially. Despite the devastating effects coronavirus has had on people. Goverments have still tried to provide support for families that are struggling.

One Sociological aspect that can impact a child's life experience is poverty as it affects children's education and development. Poverty is indeed a major risk for having had negative experiences as a child (ACEs). This has been discovered that having a high number of ACEs is associated with poverty, with a greater percentage of people living in the most deprived locations reporting ACEs. Although the UK has one of the wealthiest economies in the world, 4.3 million children and young people are living below the poverty line. This indicates that 30% of children, or nine pupils in every 30-pupil classroom, are classified as poor. Also, according to the Child Poverty Act (2010), people are considered to be in relative poverty if their household financial income is less than 60% of the national median income for the financial year in question (Legislation.Gov, 2010). Unfortunately, some individuals and families may be subjected to discrimination and stereotypes as a result of their financial circumstances.

Many children growing up in the United Kingdom suffer from poverty, which has a significant impact on their educational experience and achievement: According to a National Education Union survey, more than three-quarters of respondents stated that their students had demonstrated fatigue (78 percent) or poor concentration (75 percent) in school as a result of poverty. More than half of members reported that their students had suffered from hunger (57 percent) or ill health (50 percent) as a result of poverty in their communities. More than a third (35 percent) of teachers reported that their students had been bullied because of their socioeconomic status. In comparison to their wealthier peers, children who receive Free School Meals are 28 percent less likely to graduate from high school with five A*-C GCSEs. The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated the financial strains already placed on low-income families. Respondents to a recent NEU member survey reported that they were teaching students who had limited or no access to learning resources at home during the pandemic's first few months. Four out of every five members reported that their families sought additional assistance from schools or colleges during lockdown, such as the provision of basic learning resources such as pens, paper, and books. One-fifth of UK schools have established a local food bank since March 2020, with 25 percent of teachers reporting that they personally provide food and snacks to their students in order for them to consume enough calories during the school day. Poverty harms children's physical health and mental well-being and this undermines their ability to learn, in lots of different ways. One intervention that is in place is the implementation of Free School Meals which is a government scheme that allows children in families that have a low household income to access free meals during school In Wales(Aronsen,2001). However, in England families can apply for support regardless of their household income. Families can apply for support by completing an online form which can be found on the government website. The scheme has received a lot of praise recently because of its highly beneficial influence on children's wellbeing and takes some of the pressure off families that are struggling to provide food for their children. The scheme has also been adapted during the recent pandemic as schools

were closed and children were not able to access their free school meal local councils provided families with an allowance or a food package that would either be delivered, or the families could collect. This has also been backed by a well-known professional football player Marcus Rashford who formed the Child Food Poverty Task Force, which is a collaboration of charities and food companies that is calling on the government to implement suggestions from the National Food Policy. Marcus himself had been raised in a low-income neighborhood and knows first-hand how difficult it can be to live in poverty. So when the Coronavirus epidemic struck, Rashford realised that thousands of children were missing out on the free hot meals they were entitled to at least once a day while they were in school (Good to Know, 2021). In response to Rashford's campaigning, the government has reversed its position on free food vouchers, allowing 1.3 million children in England to claim free food vouchers during the school holidays (BBC Newsround, 2020). The McMillan sisters established the world's first open-air nursery to serve children from low-income families living in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Margaret McMillan was convinced that providing children from poor and deprived areas with access to fresh air, adequate exercise, and nutritious food would improve their health and well-being, thereby providing them with a better chance at success in life (Nursery World, 2015). Another way schools and local authorities have tried to reduce the impact of poverty and the link it has with hunger has on children is the implementation of a breakfast club(Boshier,2005). Welsh Assembly Government made a pledge to provide all children of primary school age who are registered in maintained primary schools throughout Wales with a free, nutritious breakfast at school each day, starting in September 2015. Both schemes mentioned are funded by the government and not through the local authority. With the average cost of a school meal costing around £2.30. It is evident how important it is for families that are living in poverty to have access to the schemes in order to provide their children with adequate nutrition. A child's or young person's right to live in a way that allows them to reach their full physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social potential is stated in Article 27 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. (Freeman,2009) as well as Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which states that healthcare for children and young people should be provided in the best possible way and goes even further by stating that children and young people have the right to be both physically and mentally fulfilled. Every class in England and Wales has 2.4 students who arrive at school hungry at least once a week and approximately 8,370 pupils arrive hungry or thirsty across England and Wales. Teachers have stated in a recent survey that if a child arrives to school hungry, they can lose up to one hour of learning (Ballentine,2011).

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