

### Inclusive Leadership

Krischler, Powell and Cate (2019) state inclusion is providing all children with the opportunity to be included in activities regardless of any differences they may have; to ensure no child is excluded, there is no discrimination, and the setting is non-judgemental. Additionally, Ferdman, Prime and Riggio (2020) believe that for inclusion to take place practitioners must understand they may have unconscious bias due to difference in morals, culture, or beliefs, however it is their responsibility to ensure children are provided with the opportunity to feel valued and represented, therefore, encouraging participation and inducing motivation. Furthermore, Ferdman, Prime and Riggio (2020, p.8) state practitioners must promote “individual uniqueness, cherish identities, and vital qualities” as this provides children with equal opportunities in their lives and promotes equity within early years settings.

The scenario being discussed within the assignment is a child has recently joined the early years setting as they have only just moved to Wales from Iraq, the child's development seems delayed, however this can be due to a language barrier as their first language is Mesopotamian Arabic causing an inability to fully assess the child due to the current assessment criteria focused on the English language (Welsh Government, 2017: Oxfordshire County Council, 2017). The child has no understanding of the English language, which has caused other children to not interact with her and practitioners seem unmotivated to encourage the child to participate as they do not know how to explain the activities, this can make the child feel excluded from the setting therefore causing the child to not feel a sense of belonging or lack feeling represented within the setting (Banerjee and Lamb, 2016). Practitioners have tried to communicate with the parents through a translation app, however the app is not translating both languages correctly, therefore causing miscommunication and negatively impacting the relationship between the parents and practitioner, making it difficult for parents and practitioners to work in collaboration and express their concerns with one-another (Ramlan, *et al.*, 2018).

Within the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) Article 2 states children are to be provided with the right to experiencing non-discrimination

within job role that includes contact with children, this includes discrimination against religion, beliefs, ethnicity, language, abilities, and their family background as this can isolate children and cause long-term impacts to children's holistic development, health, and wellbeing (Unicef, 2019). However, Hackett, *et al.* (2020) states those within racial and ethnic differences are part of a minority group as research suggests those within this category experience discrimination as they are provided with less opportunities to participate completely within society. During the study completed by Hackett, *et al.* (2020) 20.4% of the individuals who participated reported experiencing racial discrimination within their lives, this shown to have influenced their mental and physical health as they do not feel represented or accepted into their community due to their ethnicity.

Inclusivity was promoted in the scenario as practitioners ensured the child had the opportunity to participate in activities regardless of the racial and ethnic difference (Willis, Bridges and Jozkowski, 2021). Aboud, *et al.* (2012) believes a positive attitude towards racial and ethnic inclusion enables children to feel welcomed into the setting, their confidence is influenced as they are more likely to approach practitioners and they feel comfortable within the setting; encouraging participation and involvement; therefore, providing efficient practice in promoting inclusion.

Donaldson (2015) believes practitioners are role models to children and when demonstrating inclusive practice children will repeat the behaviour, enabling children to develop compassion, empathy and to become "healthy, confident individuals" who can decentre themselves to understand how their actions impact others. In support of Donaldson (2015), Kaur (2012) believes children and parents have diverse needs and it is important to ensure they are not only provided with equality, but equity, as equity involves giving them opportunities by removing systemic barriers enabling children and parents to feel represented by the settings and encouraging participation regardless of diversity. Ferdman (2020) believes that by removing the systemic barriers, children and parents feel accepted and they are more likely to approach practitioners with concerns in which practitioners can implement support strategies. However, during the scenario practitioners were also unmotivated to encourage the

child to participate, which can cause the child to feel excluded and isolated as positive reinforcement is taking place for other children but not them, this is discriminatory behaviour and does not provide a positive role model for children (Reesha, *et al.*, 2015).

Ferdman (2020) suggests practitioners have unconscious bias, however it is their responsibility to ensure their unconscious bias is not present within their practice, including ethnicity, religion, morals, and values as it is the responsibility of the practitioner to advocate for children and support children in self-discovery and individualism. When practitioners continually participate in inclusive practice, Ferdman and Deane (2013) suggest all practitioners will develop unconscious inclusion rather than unconscious bias, as an awareness of minority groups and continual inclusion becomes part of their natural practice. Additionally, driven mindsets to developing unconscious inclusion includes being open minded as it enables practitioners to accept information which opposes their own beliefs and provides information on other individuals perceptions (Blyznyuk, 2018). Vozza (2017) believes open-mindedness is a growth mindset and should be adopted in accordance with Piaget's cognitive theory and the two schemas assimilation and accommodation, assimilation is the information we currently have, however we are to change our thinking patterns to accommodate when additional knowledge is discovered which enables practitioners to develop their knowledge on how to promote inclusion. Ferdman (2020) believes encouraging and supporting practitioners to be openminded creates a setting which promotes diversity in children and encourages children to develop their own sense of belonging, because practitioners can understand the importance of discovering additional information on varied topics which influence children's holistic development, including children's own thoughts, opinions, and morals; to develop their individualism and feel represented within the setting.

In contrast Benson and Fiarman (2020) state that not all practitioners can overcome their unconscious bias as things such as religion will undoubtedly become apparent and expressive in their practice as they are unaware of how their culture influences their practice. This behaviour is unintentional and is not directed towards harming

children, however when taken place practitioners can unintentionally make children feel excluded, therefore isolating the child (Como, 2019). Additionally, Benson and Fiarman (2020) also believe inequities will not become eradicated because there will always be specific minority groups who are not represented within communities; however, it is a practitioner's responsibility to attempt to eradicate discriminative and excluding behaviours as they have a delegation to advocate for children.

Furthermore, Karoly and Gonzalez (2011) state children who are non-native speakers are not provided with the learning opportunities that other children are because practitioners can extend learning opportunities with aspects such as sustained-shared thinking, however this usually does not take place if a child does not understand the native language. This does not promote inclusion because lack of learning opportunities due to communication barriers does not enable children to strengthen their language development or "language-processing efficiency" (Weisleder and Fernald, 2013, p.2143).

Goenka (2016) believe language barriers can cause communication barriers in understanding the needs of children; impacting the quality-of-care practitioners can provide as they are unable to understand what a child wants or needs. Maslow (1970) *cited in* Rodd (2013) states that children have a hierarchy of needs in which they need their basic needs and psychological needs to be met to achieve self-actualization and become ready for learning at their full potential. When there is a language barrier between the child and the practitioner, children are not provided with these needs as there is no way for the child to communicate with the practitioner what they need or desire (Maslow, 1970, *cited in* Rodd, 2013). Medcalf, Hoffman and Boatwright (2012) conclude through their research study, children who are not provided with their basic and psychological needs are less likely to achieve developmental milestones as they are unable to engage fully when aspects such as food, sleep, health, relationships, and self-esteem are deteriorated.

Inclusive practice ensures that every child is provided with their holistic needs as it ensures equitable practice and provides every child the opportunity to learn at their full potential; enabling children to discover themselves, achieve self-actualization and individualism (Maslow, 1970, *cited in* Rodd, 2013). Practitioners promoting self-actualization through provision of needs encourages children to become fully engaged as they feel comfortable, confident, and respected within the setting (Ivtzan, *et al.*, 2013). Krems and Kenrick and Neel (2017) believe practitioners can promote self-actualization by working collaboratively with children because a child knows how they feel and what they need allowing for practitioners to not only have a brief holistic understanding of what children need, but a wider understanding of the child's specific needs and unique abilities; enabling an inclusive approach centred around the child.

Within the UNCRC article 13 states that children have the right to think and express their own thoughts, opinions, and feelings if it does not harm anyone or break the law (Unicef, 2019). Carter, *et al.* (2012) state children have this right because when children are given the opportunity to do this they can explore and discover themselves, enabling them to understand how they are and what kind of person they want to be. Taylor, Pacinini-Ketchabaw and Blaise (2012) provides an understanding that a practitioner should encourage diverse individualism as it is children's ability to understand their own sense of belonging in the world, their interests, and their own beliefs, whether it be a religion or their own morals and values. When promoted and encouraged within settings children are more likely to express themselves in a healthy way and develop their own morals which respect others, their beliefs and culture (Taylor, Pacinini-Ketchabaw and Blaise, 2012).

Additionally, Carter, *et al.* (2012) supports this as practitioners promoting through inclusive practice, enables children to develop individuality, allowing for children to gain inspiration of job roles they would like to have and encourages extra-curricular activities which benefit the community as children understand how to take care of others and the environment. When children know how to take care of the environment, they develop sustainable habits as they can understand how actions impact the world, enabling children to be conscious on how to improve the ecosystem as it "cleans the

water, purifies the air, maintains the soil, regulates climate, recycles nutrients and provides food” (European Commission, no date, p.1). Hart (2013) states that children understanding the impact that climate change has on their environment encourages them to prevent pollution and negative environmental footprint, therefore, encouraging children to partake in combating deforestation. Additionally, Donaldson (2015, p.29) believes understanding how to take care of the environment enables children to become “valued members of society” as it allows children to develop empathy, to provide kindness and compassion to others and develop strong and positive relationships throughout their lives.

Driskell (2017) believes that children’s ideas enable communities to improve the environment and what is accessible, because when following their advice, it builds trusting relationships between young people and adults, which ensures everyone can work together when the community is at risk or when individuals need supporting. Driskell (2017) believes the community knows their people more than government officials as they are directly involved and are having first-hand experiences, therefore, they are more likely to provide useful information which can be used to improve environments to become safe and positive, create or develop policies and procedures for settings and create accessible facilities directed towards targeting specific issues within the area.

Bauld, *et al.* (no date) believe drug usage and violence are linked to unemployment as when an individual is unemployed, they are more likely to be engaged in excessive stress, which to control and relieve their stress they self-medicate and can rely on illegal drugs. When taking drugs, it can cause an individual to become more agitated and lowers their logical thinking, causing them to have violent outbursts and to participate in petty crimes, such as theft (Bauld, *et al.*, no date). To overcome this, Hart (2013) believes practitioners involving collaboration with the community can build relationships and encourage positive association children and parents have with the community. Furthermore, Hart (2013) also states when children become part of the community it decreases statistics on illegal drug usage, violence, and unemployment for the youth and adults because when negative behaviour such as these are

recognised, the community can collaborate in supporting the individuals to overcome the difficulties they are facing by informing them of facilities or by encouraging them to speak to professionals.

Language barriers which are faced during this scenario can be overcome through practitioners ensuring there are accessible cue cards for the child which have images of specific items or phrases in English and Mesopotamian Arabic, as this provides the child with the basic steps of the English language and promotes bilingualism for children (Dalim, *et al.*, 2016). Zainuddin, *et al.* (2016) believe that cue cards for children who speak a non-native language enables children to visualise items and phrases that are common with the settings culture, enabling children to begin understanding the language and providing them with equal opportunities to engage and inform practitioners what they need or want.

Kuwornu (2017) believes that assessing children who are non-native speakers will undoubtedly cause them to have lower outcomes as they are being assessed using a language they do not know. Children are assessed on their use of the language in structing sentences by including adjectives, however within specific languages connection words and vowels do not exist the same, for example in some languages there are mutations on consonants (Writing Explained, 2021). Therefore, children being assessed using a language they do not completely comprehend will reflect that they have delayed development which may actually not be delayed, only that the practitioner does not understand what the child is saying (Kuwornu, 2017).

Welsh Government (2017) discusses assessments enable practitioners to identify areas children are struggling with and to identify possible additional learning needs (ALN) children may have, providing a framework to use to plan activities to target specific areas of development for children and to implement interventions for children, including multi-agency working as they can provide professional support due to excessive knowledge of their profession. However, Welsh Government (2019) believe assessments should not only be used to understand children's development and

understand if early intervention is needed, but it should also be used to identify children's interests to allow for practitioners to implement play activities children enjoy, encouraging children's engagement. However, due to the language barriers in completing assessment for children there is no true understanding of the child's development or interests because of the inability to communicate with the child. Therefore, the practitioner is unable to know whether the child can do things such as having structured sentences and causing practitioners to not know how to plan activities appropriately for the child (Geay, McNally and Telhaj, 2013). Furthermore, within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), Vygotsky believes for practitioners to sufficiently provide children with efficient support they need to understand their holistic development to scaffold children and provide them with equitable learning opportunities (Bodrova, Germeroth and Leong, 2013; Bøttcher and Dammeyer, 2016).

During this scenario the practitioners promoted inclusivity as they attempted to communicate their concerns with the parents, Azad, and Mandell (2015) believe communication with parents allows for practitioners to build positive relationships with parents, enabling collaboration directed towards supporting their child and understanding strategies and interventions which can support the child efficiently. Bronfenbrenner believes cooperation with parents is important because parents are children's first educators in life, are children's biggest role models and have the most influence over them as children spend most of their lives with their parents in their early childhood (Xiao, 2020). Additionally, Degotardi, Sweller and Pearson (2013) believe positive relationships between practitioners and parents enable children to have positive role models, enabling children to understand the importance of sustainable positive relationships and working in collaboration with others.

However, during the scenario whilst the practitioner did attempt to communicate, it became unsuccessful due to the language barrier and the translation app causing miscommunication between the practitioner and parents (Paat, 2013). Therefore, negatively impacting the relationship between them which can cause barriers in understanding the most effective strategies to supporting the child (Paat, 2013). Vygotsky's theory ZPD, discusses when practitioners do not understand effective

strategies to support the child, they are unable to provide children with equitable enhancing learning opportunities throughout their early education which promotes inequality and exclusion (Bodrova and Leong, 2018).

To overcome the language barrier in communicating with parents, inclusive leaders could implement strategies such as including translators when communicating with parents and when assessing the child, as this enables practitioners to understand how to support the child efficiently (García-Sánchez, Orellana, and Hopkins, 2011). Additionally, they can build a positive relationship with the parents and practitioners can support the parents and families if they are facing difficulties within their lives (Schneider and Arnot, 2018).

#### *Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*

During this section there will be a critical analysis of the *Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015* on how it promotes inclusion in enabling children to feel valued, respected, represented, and to feel a sense of belonging within the setting. Unicef (2019) states within Article 2 of the UNCRC children have the right to be free from discrimination as children must not experience being excluded due to race, religion, culture, gender, or abilities. When inclusion is not promoted it can negatively impact children's self-esteem, self-awareness, confidence, and holistic development because children are less likely to engage or participate in activities when they do not feel a sense of belonging (Tobia, Riva and Caprin, 2017).

The *Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015* aims to understand the long-term impacts that decisions have on children and how they can positively support the wellbeing of children by preventing health inequities, poverty and experiencing ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) which are all factors which can permanently impact children. In achieving this the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales states, it is the responsibility of all early year's practitioners to collaborate with families and the community to ensure there is prosperity and everyone can access the luxuries rather than only the necessities in life (Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, 2021).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory demonstrates the importance of collaboration within settings, as he believed collaboration enables positive relationship building and working in partnership with the best interests of the child to ensure children are provided with effective learning opportunities, early identification of additional learning needs (ALN) and practitioners can support parents if they are facing difficulties (O'Toole, Hayes and Halpenny, 2019).

Collaboration with children enables practitioners to develop a positive relationship with the child, which as Donaldson (2015) states gives the opportunity for practitioners to understand the child's interests and implement them into the setting to encourage the child to engage in equitable enhancing learning opportunities without being conscious of their learning. Williams-Siegfredsen (2021) states within Danish Forest schools they believe unconscious learning opportunities for children provides children with hands-on learning experiences which are more likely to engage and motivate children to learn as they are participating in play activities. Additionally, Williams- Siegfredsen (2021) also states play activities which involve unconscious learning improve children's confidence and holistic development because they are provided with choice, freedom, and the opportunity to engage in independent and self-initiated play therefore, enabling children to express themselves in a healthy way. Furthermore, Lerstrup and Refshauge (2016) support this as they believe children's engagement in unconscious play ignites children's natural curiosity and provides them with the opportunity to participate in risk and challenge activities. Therefore, promoting sustained-shared learning opportunities where practitioners can work in collaboration with children to discover solutions to their inquisitive and unique minds (Cerino, 2021).

Through collaboration with children, practitioners can participate in continual observation which enables practitioners to adapt activities in accordance with children's needs and abilities (Craft, McConnon and Matthews, 2012; Mulholland and O'Connor, 2016). Additionally, understanding children's needs and abilities through collaboration ensures practitioners can implement activities which give every child the opportunity to participate, ensuring that every child is included regardless of diversity

(Lemke, 2018). However, Ghosh and Worth (2020) believe with the everchanging curriculum set to be in place practitioners are progressively unable to engage in collaboration with children due to the ratios that are currently in place. Positive ratio sizes enable practitioners to provide children with efficient care provision, however, in Wales the ratios are not sufficient to ensure that every child feels represented and included (Miranda, 2017).

Obiakor, *et al.* (2012) states that working in collaboration with parents enables practitioners to understand the family background of the child, ensuring they represent the child's culture and personal interests within the setting and allowing for the child to feel valued and gain a sense of belonging within the setting. Additionally, during collaboration practitioner can develop a positive relationship with the family enabling the family to feel comfortable confident to approach them with their personal concerns where a practitioner can support the family (Gonzalez, *et al.*, 2018). When working with parents, a positive relationship also enables parents and practitioners to feel confident in approaching one-another about concerns which may need multi-agency working partnerships (Dunn, *et al.*, 2016).

Within the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015* it discusses the importance of supporting children to achieve success throughout their lives as this enables children to achieve and discover their interests and desires (Welsh Government, 2015). Welsh Government (2015) also states this takes place to encourage individualism and allow children to become productive and innovative and achieve employment opportunities which are highly skilled. However, Ferdman (2020) believes to provide prosperity to children there needs to be an understanding of micro; impact on the direct individuals and macro; the influence that government officials have upon direct individuals during policy making and promoting inclusive practice. Additionally, Ferdman (2020) states, when curriculums are created on a macro level, it does not take into consideration the influence it has upon the micro level as usually the people creating the curriculums have not experienced the impact it has on settings. Dewey (1904) *cited in* Korthagen (agrees) agrees as he believes people creating curriculums not having experienced the direct influence it has upon settings has

always been difficult to place theory into practice. Furthermore, Loreman, Forlin and Sharma (2014) believes a reduced understanding of the impact a macro level policy has upon a micro level policy and the settings it applies to can cause practitioners to become unable to promote inclusion. Adamson, *et al.* (2020) believe this is because macro-organisations do not always provide suitable inclusive implementation strategies to minority groups as the policies only enforce equality strategies, rather than equity strategies which remove the barriers entirely. During this legislation the macro policy states practitioners must ensure they “enable people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background” however this does not consider that children learn at different paces (Welsh Government, 2015, p.6).

### Visibly the norm? Assumptions and risks of stereotyping

Stereotyping is a fixed mindset that assumes a person has specific personality traits based on one specific aspect of them, this includes disabilities, culture, race or gender (Hamilton and Mackie, 2014). However, stereotypes are not just the physical attributes, an individual can assume a person is not a minority based on a norm that includes an individual's physical appearance (Song, 2020). Song (2020) believes to promote inclusion practitioners must not make assumptions about children and families and are to collaborate with parents and children to understand their attributes. Additionally, as Donaldson (2015) states, practitioners should focus on what a child can do, rather than what they can't because it allows children to feel excepted and valued.

Aina and Cameron (2013) believe that stereotyping children cause children to lack confidence, self-esteem, and feel excluded from the setting because they do not feel accepted, valued or represented within the settings. This does not facilitate children's development because when children do not feel represented, they lack a sense of belonging and do not engage to their full potential in activities (Koenig, 2018). Ensuring stereotypes are combated by practitioners allows for children to participate in creative self-expression, enabling children to discover their personal individualism and what they are passionate about (Liberman, Woodward and Kinzler, 2017). A practitioner's responsibility is to support children in discovering themselves and encouraging

children to participate in activities that are intellectually challenging and stimulating, this enables inclusivity to take place because practitioners are celebrating diversity rather than discouraging it (Lindqvist and Nilholm, 2013).

Parsons, Rollyson and Reid (2012) believe practitioners should engage in continuous training to develop their learning and expand their skills as there is continuous research discovering the more efficient way of approach children's learning. Vygotsky's theory ZPD provides an understanding that practitioners responsibility is to scaffold children's development which can be approached through sustained-shared thinking opportunities, implementing equitable enhancing learning activities, positive reinforcement and including children's interests in activities which are planned (Moisés, 2018). Practitioners utilising this understanding enables them to understand the important of collaboration and working directly with children, enabling a positive and trusting relationship to be developed in which the practitioner understand the child's interests, opinions, culture and family background from the child's perspective (Roorda, *et al.*, 2011).

However, Cózar-Gutiérrez and Sáez-López (2016) state teacher training opportunities should not only include training strategies to scaffolding children within early years, but to be trained in the usage of teaching skills because these skills ensure practitioners understand how they should promote inclusive practice. Welsh Government (2015a) believe teacher training opportunities should take place more frequently because it clarifies information which is needed to ensure children are provided with equitable learning opportunities. Additionally, Welsh Government (2015a) also discuss when continual efficient training opportunities for practitioners do not take place, practitioners begin to lack the complete understanding of the importance of implementing strategies which promote inclusion, such as including free choice.

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