

Part 1

A catalyst is something that can create a reaction. Hamers (2017) describes a catalyst in a chemical form as a material that causes a reaction to speed up. When you add a catalyst to something it causes a reaction that allows the original materials to become something bigger and more capable than what they would be alone. A catalytic leader works in a similar way, as they allow individuals to become more than they are capable of becoming by themselves. According to Zachery (2011), 'A leadership catalyst is someone who is able to influence others to commit to achieving common goals or objectives' meaning that by collaboratively working together individuals can successfully change things for the better

Eckert (2021) also describes catalytic leadership as something that speeds up a reaction. In an education setting, such as an early years school, a catalyst is something that is sustainable and accelerates good work. An example is that Eckert (2021) believes that a catalytic leader is not one person, but is a collective group of individuals working together to better what is already working but changing things to improve the movement even further. These individuals are your teachers, administrators, teaching assistants, and so forth. This works as long as the catalytic leader focuses on where it needs to be and work together so that no individual is spreading themselves too thin.

TedxTalks (2016) agree with Eckert stating that leadership is not about a position, and you do not need to be a general, chief executive or a headmaster, anyone can be a leader. Many believe that a good leader often creates change but does not take credit for it as they allow others to believe that they were successful so that they have the confidence to keep changing and progressing. In the video, Peter discusses how he believes the first rule of leadership is that it is not about you, but it is about giving others the confidence to lead and believe in what it is you are trying to achieve. A leader cannot be a leader without having followers and the best leaders will not create more followers, they will create more leaders instead. Rule number two of leadership is that it is only about you, as it is down to you to make the change and it depends on what you are like as a person. You should change things because you want to not because you are waiting for others to change. As Mansell Mandela stated, "I could not change others until I changed myself", meaning he needed to work on himself, his beliefs and what he wanted to change before helping others to do the same.

Some people believe a catalytic leaders should be someone who has studied or gone to university to study this is because they have the correct morals and values needed to make a positive change and are passionate about what it is they want to adapt. Sims et al. (2015) support this, sharing how it is common in early childhood for leaders to have moved into a leadership position by accident and as a result are under-prepared for the challenges and complexities they may face during a process of leading. Furthermore, graduates studying early years have the knowledge and confidence to make positive changes to better a child's provision and there is a need for early years leaders to all have higher qualifications if they are to lead in any way.

Catalytic leaders are more important now than ever as the Welsh government is bringing in the new curriculum and practitioners need to embrace it rather than resist it.

Nicholson. *et al.* (2018) Ankrum (2016) and Cooper (2014) disagree with Sims *et al* as they believe working in partnership is the best way in order to lead and make changes. However, they do state how leaders are often ranked in a hierarchy and how their progress up the career ladder tends to matter, as it is those individuals at the higher end of the system that tend to be leaders. Cooper explains how this affects many practitioners as they lack the confidence to lead and feel as though the responsibility should be shared. Nicholson *et al.* also look at social justice and equity in discussions of leadership in early childhood and believe that under the different articles of the UNCRC, children should be put at the centre when it comes to leaders making changes and decisions, no child should be discriminated against in any way.

Nicholson *et al.* states that 'early childhood programs are responsible for designing environments to include all children and catalytic leaders should ensure that this happens'. This could be achieved by using methods like sustained shared thinking and inclusive leadership. Sustained shared thinking is when individuals collaboratively work together. Siraj *et al.* (2015) define sustained shared thinking as 'two or more individuals "working together" in an intellectual way to resolve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities, extend a narrative etc'. By doing this leaders will have more knowledge and understanding and therefore will be able to provide better quality provision to children and help them with any issues impacting on their lives.

Randel *et al.* (2018) describes inclusive leadership as someone who facilitates belongingness. This is done by displaying certain behaviours, such as making sure every individual is treated fairly by ensuring justice, equality, supporting group members, understanding that every individual is unique and therefore encouraging diverse contributions, and ensuring that every voice is heard.

Ferdman (2021) agrees defining inclusive leadership as how individuals feel valued, respected, and appreciated. Ferdman believes a good leader will treat every individual as an equal no matter their race, gender, ethnic group, or beliefs. This is important as not all children have the same opportunities and advantages in life and some children will struggle more with sociological needs, for example, poverty, or being in a pandemic. Some children face daily struggles in their lives as they may not be as fortunate as others and will need the support of practitioners to lean on. By being good leaders and managers and by using their skills and power, such as inclusive leadership and sustained shared thinking, they will be able to help those who need the support and make sure that the setting is equipped to meet their needs. An example of this is holding a breakfast club for those individuals who may not be able to afford 3 meals a day.

All leaders have a certain set of skills in order to lead. Kousez *et al.* (2018) describes some of the skills needed to be a good leader. These skills are: knowing the way, being able to challenge the process, encouraging others to act and share their thoughts and ideas, challenging different concepts, and should be open with others, and encouraging everyone to get involved.

A catalytic leader is slightly different from being a leader, as they motivate change and will make change happen. Rosa Parks, for example, was a catalytic leader as she made change happen and because of her actions, a movement was created that allowed others to speak up.

According to Joiner (2017), to become a catalytic leader individuals often go through different stages of leading, and as the levels increase so does the complexity. These levels are the expert leader, the achiever leader, and then lastly a catalyst leader. Joiner states how only around 10% of leaders have the ability to lead at a catalytic level. This is often because many individuals can put forward for change but not many can succeed and ensure that change happens.

In order to be a good catalytic leader, you must be an enabling adult, and this means that you are open to change as well as work on making a change in order to receive positive

outcomes. To become a catalytic leader others must be willing to work with you. As the catalytic leader, you must reduce resistance, regardless of if others do not believe in what it is you want to change. They will resist against you rather than work with you and this could cause the desired change to slow down and potentially stop completely. According to Ansell and Gash (2012) and Clark (2012), a catalytic leader's role is to enforce change but also understands that stakeholders hold a vital role in the process, and they know that change and innovation are enhanced by collaboration.

Clark goes on to state how early years practitioners are accountable for high-quality provision within their settings and explains what he believes is needed to be a catalytic leader. The requirement is: a level of sensitivity, to be caring and open, and have a willingness to share ideas and thoughts.

Beato (2020) highlights how catalytic leadership is important as it allows change to happen. Without having leaders who are willing to try and motivate change, nothing would improve, the practice would remain the same, boundaries would not be pushed and therefore leading to no progression and eventually demotivated students. Catalytic leadership is important as it inspires others and provides direction.

EKR Family Limited Partnership (2022) agrees with Ansell and Gash that change can cause resistance. They describe the Kübler-Ross Change Curve model as a model to help people understand their reactions to significant change. When using this to refer to a catalytic leader, they will motivate change. When individuals and their values are at a low and people begin to resist the change, leaders motivate them and keep them going, ensuring that change is still happening. An example of this is if someone has quit drinking and all of a sudden, they lose motivation as they have stopped seeing progress, a catalytic leader will motivate them again and encourage the change to progress further.

A leader needs to be flexible. Joan (2013) noted the importance of flexible learning for children, highlighting how flexible learning helps the practitioner to plan their activities to suit the children's interests and enthusiasm. An example of this, is if you are a practitioner/leader who is teaching a child, you could have planned a lesson on learning about plants, but the child appears more interested in knowing about the animals that eat those plants, and as a leader, you should feed their curiosity and adapt the lesson. This is important as it shows a willingness to change and it also promotes good quality education.

A catalytic leader needs to be able to identify what needs to change, they can do this by being aware of their surroundings and adapting practice. For example, with sociological factors like the pandemic, it is very clear that this will affect children. Babies will not have seen as many facial cues and gestures due to everyone wearing face masks and this may affect their growth and development as well as making them feel anxious. Leaders must adapt their practice to support them, and they could do this by being responsive to stakeholders around them, such as parents, and use those individuals to help the children feel more comfortable when they return or begin school. Zaho (2020) believes that Covid gave educators an opportunity to enhance practice and gives hope to change education so that it comes from the perspectives of the children instead of the curriculum. Despite many children having suffered from not being able to receive education, it opened up the opportunity for change and for school leaders to work on today's context and what is needed moving forwards.

Part 2

The Children Act puts children and young people first and concentrates on their right to being heard. NSPCC (2021) discusses how the children act is regularly reviewed and updated with the help of stakeholders. In 1948 the first children act came about which put out new support measures that all local authorities had to follow, which set out a duty to provide care to any child who was not being cared for properly if it was in the best interest of the child.

Legislation.gov.uk (no date) then discuss how in 1975 the importance of children's welfare was highlighted within the children's act. Following this in 1989 the children's act created their legislative framework for the current child protection system in England and Wales which focused on the welfare of the child and their voice being heard. They also put forward the idea of the UNCRC. OHCHR (2021) agrees, mentioning how the UNCRC was put forwards in 1989 and in 1990 was approved to be put into force in line with article 49.

The UNCRC has 54 articles relating to the child's life and making sure that the child is parallel, it promotes the rights of the child which allows children to be empowered by a political framework that respects them and helps them become competent adults.

The Act of parliament recognised that the law needed to change so that children's rights were heard, and so the UNCRC was developed. According to the Welsh government (2015) we must abide by the UNCRC and place children's rights firsts which the Government agreed

to in 1991. These rights protect children from birth up until the age of 18. These rights ensure that all children and young people are safe, treated equally, not discriminated against, have their best interests protected, have their basic needs met and have a say in decisions that affect them.

Save the children (No date) discusses how the UNCRC should be available to all children and that it is down to the government to ensure that all individuals have the rights to life, education, development, protection from violence, abuse, or neglect, to have good partnerships or relationship with their parents and to be able to express their opinions and be listened to. 196 countries all follow the UNCRC and are bound to it by law to ensure that it is implemented. Politicians put the laws in place, and children's rights allowance (no date) state how it was Eglantyne Jebb who wrote the first declaration of a child's rights in 1923.

The Care Quality Commissioner (2016) discusses how children need to be heard and listened to under article 12 of the UNCRC in order to grow and develop, they need to be shown love and understanding and in turn, will grow up to show the same empathy. The Saying "Children should be seen and not heard", is a prime example of how historical context has shaped the world we live in today. Often children growing up would be told this as it was believed children should respect their elders meaning they should stay silent. However, this meant the child was not being respected and their voice was being ignored and it is because of acts and laws now put in place that this is no longer allowed to happen, giving a child the right to be seen, heard, and understood. The NSPCC understands that listening to children improves their emotional, mental, and physical health and so it is everyone's duty who has a responsibility to that child to ensure that their needs are being met. By creating an act of parliament like the UNCRC it meant children had the right to be treated fairly and improved child welfare which means children's rights have become more apparent and are listened to more, according to the children and young people's commissioner Scotland (2022).

Because the Government stated that we need to put a focus on the rights of the child, this then allowed stakeholders and education settings to look at what they could do moving forwards. This lead to things like the new curriculum which puts the child in the centre and focuses on them rather than their academic levels and this is important as under article 28 of the UNCRC which states children have the right to education no matter who they are or what background they come from it means that children will always be prioritised and thought of with decisions regarding their best interests. The Children commissioner for Wales (2022)

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explains that when working with children practitioners must place the UNCRC at the core of their education and experiences and that when planning, teaching, or making decisions regarding policies and practice, the rights of the child and all the UNCRC articles need to be considered.

The UNCRC has led to many laws changing, for example, there is now a law that states you cannot smack a child. Before 2022 parents were able to hit children and many believed it did them good, some individuals believed that when children got punished in school before the early 90s it was a good form of discipline, however, it was cruel and did not respect the rights of the child. Breathnach (2020) explains that previously in Wales, England and Northern Ireland, the law stated nothing against hitting a child, however in January 2020, the Welsh Assembly passed a law banning smacking completely, which will come into force in 2022. This means children have the same legal protection as adults when it comes to any form of harm or assault. This works in line with article 19 of the UNCRC which states that children have the right to be protected from being hurt or badly treated. Having these laws in place have helped enforce articles like the UNCRC as it is now punishable to hurt a child in any way and this is a big step forwards in protecting children and their rights.

There are many other historical events that changed and helped shape children's lives to this day for example the first free school meal was given out in 1941 under the National School Meals Policy, which required school meals to provide a balanced diet. Food Active (2022) state how it became a legal requirement to ensure that all children were supplied with a well-balanced and nutritious meal especially those from low-income households. This Act being implemented has led to many discussions on free school meals and what help should be given moving forwards for those children who struggle with sociological factors such as poverty. These children would benefit from having free school meals and breakfast clubs. Another historical event that the legislation.gov.uk (no date) state is the Education Act for free school milk which came about in 1944 after the minister understood and realised the importance of all children having calcium to help their bones and growth. The minister recognised that this was a need that children should have access to and ensured that all schools complied to the act.

However, change does not always prove to be successful. This is because although the government respect and understands the rights of the child they will not always be able to put things in place to support them. An example of this is providing money towards those children

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in poverty; there are thousands of children still in poverty today however the government are not sure what to do about it or furthermore will not put any money towards helping. An option is that they could look at creating food collectives for those families in need or ensuring that through sociological factors such as the pandemic, that families had enough food to last.

Blackhall (2021) discusses the meal packages that parents received throughout lockdown for their children to last the week with many parents complaining that the food received was lacking nutrients. One parent contacted the school to ask what was she supposed to make using the ingredients given as there simply was not enough, meaning she then had to use her rent money to buy more food. Another parent was shocked to see the only source of Carbohydrates was 2 potatoes. Luckily as Save the children (2020) explain, Marcus Rashfords campaign to extend free school meals to children throughout the summer holidays was an incredible achievement and has become a lifeline to children. This campaign came about as Marcus Rashford recognised and agreed with Blackhall that children were missing their rights to a good childhood, with many children lacking the opportunity to learn and play and be free from hunger. Moving forwards, this issue is now being looked at by the government and options are being considered on what could be done to help further.

Something that helped bring forwards change in children's rights was having a children's commissioner. It was only after the Victoria Climbié case that England appointed a child commissioner and according to NSPCC (2021) it was the children Act 2004 that created and pushed for England to have a child commissioner. This makes you question why such terrible things needed to happen in order for individuals to realise the need for change and protection.

A child commissioner is an independent human rights institute for children and young people and the organisation's aim is to safeguard and promote the rights and welfare of children. If chosen to be the child commissioner your role is to promote/protects the rights, views, and best interests of the children regarding policies or decisions affecting their lives. They especially help those children who are vulnerable. Gov.uk (no date)

Wales's First childhood commissioner was Peter Clarke and he worked under the Children's Commissioner for Wales Act 2001. legislation.gov.uk (no date). He took up the post in March 2001 and it was the first post of its kind. Community care (2007) discussed how Peter always placed the highest importance on listening to the views of children and young people and ensuring that their voices were heard. Raymond Ciborowski described Peter as

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hardworking and worked tirelessly to draw attention to the need to improve child and adolescent mental health services in Wales.

According to Philpot (2007) Peter Clarke threatened legal action against the assembly on how it took decisions about children. He was so passionate about his role and protecting children that he went against the government that he worked for to stand up for what he believed was right. Even though he worked for the government he was not scared to question it, and it was this passion that created change and ensured children's rights were heard.

Keith Towler then became the child commissioner from 2008 up until 2015. Sally Holland then took up the role in 2015 and was the first female to do so. She was the third and is the current child Commissioner for Wales.

According to the Children's Commissioner for Wales (2017) and (2022), Sally Holland prior to this role was a social worker and professor for Cardiff University. Her areas of expertise are children's rights, family support, protection, and adoption. Sally was the commissioner through the pandemic. She set up CASCADE which is the children's social care research and development centre, and she works on promoting the rights and welfare of children and young people in Wales. Her main framework is the UNCRC where she works on ensuring all children are protected and happy. She helped children as she ensured that procedures were followed, and she helped develop new acts and plans that she felt needed to be put in place to help support children's rights. Sally will finish her role as the Child commissioner for Wales in April where Rocio Cifuentes will take on the position from 2019-2029.

Another Act that was introduced a little later but helped the movement in supporting children's rights was the Wales Safeguarding and Procedures Act 2019. The procedures help practitioners ensure that they know how to safeguard children and make sure that they feel safe and are away from harm. It was put in place to help practitioners understand their roles and responsibilities and know which organisation, team, or practitioner has lead responsibility for safeguarding. This helped children as practitioners became more aware of what signs to look out for if they felt as though a child was in danger. Wales Safeguarding Procedures (no date) is also accessible to all practitioners via an app.

Part 3

Sociological aspects are something that occurs within society that impacts that society in a certain way. Libraries (no date) discusses how our social backgrounds influence our attitudes, behavior and life chances. For example, we could have the same culture, gender, race, social class as someone else, but if we have not been given the same chances in life, our opportunities will differ leading to some individuals being put at a disadvantage. An example of this could be 2 individuals that are of the same gender, race, and age, however, the difference between them is that one of the individuals has grown up wealthier, whereas the other individual comes from a background of being below the poverty line. Now let's say these two individuals were to go for the same job interview, the individual who has not struggled with sociological factors is able to afford a nice suit and looks clean, whereas the other individual who struggles to receive basic needs has to wear their old clothes that may not be the cleanest. The individual with the suit and clean appearance is more likely to get the job even if they are less suited for it and even though the individual who could not afford a suit may have needed the job more, this is because the individual from the wealthier background gives off a better impression to the employer.

This is how Sociological factors can impact individuals, not all individuals are given the same hand in life and many lack the support and basic needs in order to succeed. A good example of a sociological factor that can impact individuals is poverty.

Poverty is a massive problem worldwide, United Nations Global Compact (no date) states that More than 700 million people live in extreme poverty. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2022) shows figures that within the UK, 22% of the population live in poverty, and a shocking 31% of children were impacted by poverty for the year 2019/20. Covid has not helped families either, as families have had to isolate at home meaning more money is being spent on electricity and things that are needed to survive, leading to families struggling more.

Within Wales, 23% of the population live in Poverty. In the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report (2021), they stated how covid has left many families struggling to stay afloat with most families with children having to go without essentials, building up debt, and falling behind with their bills or rent.

Poverty is inequality, it is when some children are given fewer opportunities and chances in life as they do not have the resources needed to keep up with others. Green (2021) describes poverty as the 'state of not having enough material, possessions or income for a person's basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter'. It can lead to individuals being hungry and not having enough nutrition which could lead to low fatigue and illness. It can mean that individuals are left cold and lacking basic needs as well as having limited access to education and other basic services. World Vision (no date) agrees with Green that poverty means having limited access to basic needs.

Poverty affects children. Child poverty action group (2022) discuss how being a child in poverty means they miss out on opportunities and do not get the same advantages as other children, for example, they will struggle to get what other children might take for granted such as: warm clothes, food, shelter, toys and so on. This can not only affect children's physical health due to being more tired and having less concentration levels, but it can also affect their emotional wellbeing as they may feel embarrassed and sad. This could lead to certain children getting into difficult situations, for example, stealing. By doing this, some children may have good intentions such as getting food for siblings, but it may take them down a troubling path in life.

How do you tell if a child is suffering from a sociological factor like poverty and more specifically hunger? Child Poverty Action Group (2018) asked practitioners if they knew how to spot the signs of children living in poverty, 83% of respondents said they see children showing signs of hunger during the school day, they notice children's mood picking up as soon as food is mentioned or consumed, other signs of children living in poverty were children having dirty clothes, and missing out on school trips, this affects children as they cannot concentrate and their academic levels fall behind. National Educational union (2020) stated how children who have free school meals are 28% less likely to leave school with 5 A*-C GCSE grades than their wealthier peers. Weale (2019) strongly agrees that children's education suffers if they are hungry quoting that one child told researchers: "When I'm hungry I just can't concentrate, it's really, really hard for me to do that" highlighting the importance of making sure children get fed in order for them to receive the best education and opportunities for the future. Early interventions can help children living in poverty.

House of Commons (2018) defines Early Interventions as 'taking action to resolve problems as soon as possible before they become more difficult to reverse'. HM Government

(2011) agree stating that early interventions are put in place to help individuals (especially children aged 0-3) to receive the best outcomes in life, helping them better their social, emotional, and physical development. Many children are not being given the early support needed in the beginning stages of their lives leading to many of them falling into the category of struggling with sociological factors such as poverty.

Early intervention Foundation (no date) also agrees with the house of commons highlighting that if early interventions were put in place, it would save many children from receiving poor outcomes. They explain how early interventions prevent problems from occurring. These problems occur due to different risk factors impacting children, such as: poor education, family income and physical health. When a child is suffering from risk factors similar to those listed, it can put them at a disadvantage to others and this impacts their physical and emotional development.

Different families will need different support and so not all families will receive the same early interventions, for example, sometimes Universal services are not enough to support certain families and so targeted interventions are put in place. Universal Services are things like schools and GP's, whereas targeted interventions are more specific as it offers families more support for example flying start is a targeted service and it helps by offering more free services such as free childcare.

Early intervention Foundation goes on to explain how there are two types of targeted services. 'Targeted selective', which are offered to families on the basis of broad demographic risks, such as low family income, single parenthood, and so forth, and then 'targeted indicated' which is offered to families who have been identified as having a specific or diagnosed problem requiring more intensive support. Some families will need more support and early interventions than others. The idea of early interventions is that if we can help individuals address these challenges early it will prove to be more effective

Other things that can help children living in poverty is different services and organisations, for example, the Salvation Army, Oxfam, and Save the children, all give advice on how to help those children living in poverty and suggest ways to help. As well as this, new policies are being put in place to ensure that all children have their basic needs met. These organisations and services are catalytic as they address change, and they recognise that there is an issue and try to change it for the better. Brow and Mander (2021) state how poverty is a significant driver for change in relation to policy development and by changing policies and

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making sure children's rights are listened to it should reduce sociological factors such as poverty. In Wales, two Acts have been introduced recently which puts children's well-being first, these acts are The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and The Wellbeing and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Both of these acts focus on ensuring children have access to basic needs that improve their wellbeing and have the early interventions needed to support their development.

As practitioners, we must ensure that all children's needs are met, we can do this by pushing for change and being those catalytic leaders. Bevan Foundation (2022) works on bettering child poverty and often hold roundtable discussions in order to collect information to be put forwards, if you're a practitioner you can attend these meetings and voice your opinion, for example in December 2021 the Welsh Government announced that it would provide free school meals to all primary school pupils in Wales within three years. These meetings held give you as a practitioner an opportunity to highlight the importance of these services for bettering children's life experiences and ensure that these changes put forwards are followed through.

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