

ECEY6004

Inclusive Leadership: Working together to support families

Section 1

The purpose of this assignment aims to critically evaluate the importance of inclusive leadership within the early year's environment utilising challenges and opportunities the role of an inclusive leader has on children, families, professionals, and the wider community.

Whereas 'inclusion' in education would typically focus on Additional Learning Needs of Special Educational Needs. This has now changed. Reza (2021) clarifies, in education, this now means taking into consideration all forms of discrimination, exclusion, and marginalisation of access, participation and learning outcomes. Welsh Government (2016a:2) defines inclusion as 'a process through which all pupils access common opportunities in ways which relevant to their needs, and which ensures that they fully belong to the school community'. Inclusion is fundamental for the success of diverse groups, societies, and organisations.

In accordance with Ferdman (2021:3) the ability to foster and sustain an inclusive culture in settings and communities is a significant element of 21st-century leadership. Ferdman (2021:3) further acclaims, inclusive leadership requires strong understanding and skills which create opportunities to support all forms of diversity and to enhance these capabilities in oneself and others. Bortini *et al.* (2018:5) further clarifies, inclusive leadership values diversity, and welcomes everyone's individual contributions, and inspires full engagement with the developments of decision-making and shaping reality. Inclusive leadership adds a 'new dimension' to leadership perceptions by placing the focus on diverse groups and individuals. It addresses individuals at risk of marginalisation by looking at their needs, ambitions, and potential, and inspiring them to participate fully in society.

During children's time in education, Welsh Government (2022:44) affirms it is essential that children feel confident in who they are. By maintaining an inclusive practice, this

can ensure that all children have a strong sense of belonging in the setting, feeling that they are valued, represented, and have an equal opportunity to thrive.

The following situation was encountered by a health visitor who discussed their concerns about a child's development with the school. It is well known the parents and child come from a different culture as refugees, and their behaviour could be seen as cold and dismissive to other staff. As a result of this the setting and health visitor clash with the parents during one-to-one meetings and at drop-off and pick-ups with the child present (aged 4) at these occasions.

Parents

As defined by Rah *et al.* (2010) refugees are people fleeing oppression in their home country who are powerless, unable to return for reasons of race, religion, nationality, or political opinion. As of June 2022, (Home Office, 2022) 12,968 were permitted refugee status following an asylum application and 859 were granted humanitarian protection.

The inclusive leader must stimulate good practice in school services to fully incorporate positive partnership with parents, such as the parents in the given scenario. However, Lindon and Brodie (2016:234) articulate this phrase does not carry the same meaning whenever it is used. As Caroline (2004:86) convey the term 'partnership' can be vague and misrepresentative and is open to various interpretations in theory and practice. Alongside legislation, a view of holistic equality practice has encompassed social or cultural grouping, ethnic group and linguistic background, faith, gender, sexual orientation, and disability (Lindon and Brodie, 2016:245).

However, there are barriers working closely with families, including the refugee family. Without the knowledge of inclusion, individuals who are different from the traditionally represent groups, such as the parents with different culture and beliefs, may not feel accepted or valued and therefore be less likely to fully engage and contribute. If their

sense of identity is threatened or they do not feel that they can be their authentic self, their uniqueness and full contribution may be diminished or lost (Ferdman, 2021:10).

Therefore, Nutbrown *et al.* (2013) cites “when each person is valued for who they are and differences are appreciated, everyone feels included and understood, whatever their personalities, ethnic background or culture”. An inclusive leader can foster diversity to promote inclusion with all parents by addressing diversity and intergroup relations in both societal and organisational levels. Doing this requires addressing questions about differences in culture and identity in appropriate ways to structure relationships. It also requires clarifying which differences matter, in what ways, and to whom (Ferdman, 2017:238; cited by Ferdman, 2021:7).

Parents contribution in their children’s learning is a fundamental element in early years provision. As stated by Oke *et al.* (2021), there is strong evidence that emphasises the importance of family involvement in early childhood education and care in children’s development and how when combined with professional involvement has a very positive impact on children’s holistic development.

A barrier many practitioners face with parents is communication. O’Sullivan (2015) states although communication seems such an obvious aspect, but for many leaders it can have disproportionate significance when they do not get it right. However, in research conducted by Rah *et al.* (2010) many school practitioners view communication with parents as ‘particularly complicated’ due to illiteracy, hence communication in the form of emails, letters, and newsletters, is rendered ineffective. As cited by Rah *et al.* (2010), Hamilton (2004) emphasises the importance of a ‘mediator’ between school and families. He portrayed mediators as individuals who obtain an in-depth understanding of both the school ethos and the culture of the refugee family, who can act as an advisor to develop good communication channels between the child, school, and parents.

Professionals

The inclusive leaders must discuss the concerns about the child's development with the health visitor as understanding child development is critical to good practice in the early years (Lindon and Brody, 2016:1). Health visitors promote health in the whole community (Smith *et al.*, 2012:269), they build non-dependant relationships to enable efficient working with children, young people, and families to promote health and to keep children safe, as stated by Public Health England (2021). Working in partnership with health visitors can support the community by anticipates better-quality health outcomes and a reduction in health inequalities whilst improving access to, and influence over, the wider community, allowing the promotion of social cohesion (Public Health England, 2017).

Working with other staff members in the setting, a barrier some practitioners face is although they are educated to teach in an inclusive classroom, many did not graduate from a system that was inclusive (Timmons, 2009). In accordance with Show Racism the Red Card (2020:43) $\frac{3}{4}$ of teachers in Wales have not received any anti-racism training, with many lacking assurances in recognising and reporting racism as well as supporting those involved, whereas only 32.4% of teachers have received training on how to recognise, respond to, report, and follow up suspected incidents of racial discrimination (Show Racism the Red Card, 2020:24). The inclusive leader can ensure all staff are inclusive to the family in the scenario and other families who enter the setting by providing relevant and up to date training. As mentioned by Orte *et al.* (2017) training is needed in relational and personal skills when seeking to improve practitioners' reliance on family support skills.

As advised by Smith *et al.* (2012:190) settings need to ensure their policies and procedures work towards equality and inclusion. Individual managers, inclusive leaders and practitioners need to be aware that they may hold attitudes that value some families more than others- for example, based on social class or race. Therefore, work with families must be based on mutual respect and partnership where views are valued. As advised by Bortini *et al.* (2018) the inclusive leader needs to have the

courage to take mindful steps to diminish barriers for people at risk of being excluded from society.

The inclusive leader can also support other staff members as Ferdman *et al.* (2021:7) emphasises they require being able to explain how diversity matters, and to help close the gap between the tendency to avoid, reject, or minimise differences in identities or cultures and the need to move towards approaches that highlight the value of diversity and other positive diversity mindsets.

Children

According to Thommessen and Todd (2018) as the amount of people who have been forced to flee their homes and country of origin has increased in recent years, the need to understand how best to support the youngest of them, becomes pressing. Hamilton and Moore (2004:9) implies a major barrier refugee children face when arriving in a new country is to adapt to a new school environment, as the experiences, characteristics, and circumstances, past and present, refugee children have seen can significantly impact their progress, including factors such as the level of trauma experienced, how supportive the family is, and the child's and family's level of literacy in the first language, such as the child with concerns in the given scenario. Refugee children vary in what they bring to this situation As said by Future Generations Wales (2021), although achievement in primary schools in Wales has risen overall in recent years, inequalities continue with children from particular ethnic groups and deprived backgrounds are not achieving the same outcomes as their peers.

As indicated by Devarakonda (2013:10) suggests, ways in which the child in the scenario can be included are through a range of adapted activities enabling and empowering them to reach to their full potential in a mutually respected and inclusive society. The inclusive leader can support the child by applying Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model to explore how the environments and perspectives of immigration affect their experiences, and how they face trauma and healing in their lives (Kreitzer, *et al.*, (2022). The ecological perspective seeks to understand the interaction of people with their social and physical environments (Teater, 2014; cited by Kreitzer, *et al.*,

2022). Bronfenbrenner's model divides aspects of the environment according to the proximity with which they influence on the developing child, known as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem (Hamilton and Moore, 2004:9).

In brief, Kreitzer *et al.* (2022) recognise, the Microsystems factor for the child may include their immediate settings such as the home or school, including their parents, siblings (if any), other family member and neighbours. Mesosystems factors study relationships and connections between the child's settings, for instance how a child's home context influences school and vice versa. The ecosystem factors (considered as an extension of the mesosystem) study the setting in which the child does not participate, but that affect the child indirectly, for example, parental employment or unemployment conditions or parent's social network. Lastly, the Macrosystem factor represent the cultural and social "blueprint" for the inner circles, that symbolise the child's wider social environments, including the cultural belief of the community.

In accordance with Thommessen and Todd (2018) to support the child, the inclusive leader can support the child by delivering a structured routine and restore a sense of normality to their lives as schools can be particularly important for the refugee child in the scenario, as a sense of belonging in school can promote positive integration and well-being. School based peer support and friendships can be also particularly important in circumstances where refugee children's families are unable to provide sufficient emotional support and effective parenting (Luthar, 2015; cited by Thommessen and Todd (2018).

As stated by Lindon and Brodie (2016:246), the inclusive leader should promote an active welcome for all children and families and ensure resources and experiences reflect their family life, as well as extending understanding, foster respect and mutual understanding between children and families who see themselves different from one another, helping to find common ground, and ensure no policies or procedures place any family at a disadvantage to exclude them.

Community

A community school is defined as one that has the best interests of learners, families, and the community at its heart (Estyn, 2020:7). As stated by Reza (2021) communities around the world are becoming increasingly diverse, it is vital that schools create an atmosphere that values the different backgrounds, perspectives, and beliefs of all children, families, and staff, promoting a school environment that embraces diversity and inclusion is an ongoing practice that necessitates careful consideration of all aspects of an education setting.

However, Arar (2020) states changes in norms and values amid the host countries of refugees often erupt in socio-economic, political, and cultural rifts, that could threaten the social solidity of the host country and the solidity of all its constituent communities. Therefore, by developing community partnerships early, schools can theoretically tap into a great source of support that can strengthen their school as stated by Welsh Government (2015a:5). In successful schools, (Welsh Government, 2016b:12) believe strongly that efforts put into working with families and community partnerships can pay dividends to the school and inclusive leaders should understand that families play a central role in children's education.

The concept of community schools has been part of Welsh education policy since the early years of devolution (Estyn, 2020:3). If the school in the scenario is to be inclusive, it will need to establish itself within society. Managers, inclusive leaders, and practitioners will then need to consider their place within the broader context (Gibson and Blandford, 2005:33). Community schools reach out to engage families and work with the wider community. These schools work in highly effective strategic partnerships with a range of organisations, where possible co-locating services to enable families and the community to access them easily (Estyn, 2020:7; and Reina *et al.*, 2013).

In accordance with Estyn (2020:7), community schools work persistently to enhance the lives of children, strengthen their families, and contribute to building strong communities for the future, including the refugee family, by utilising their resources

and facilities effectually to promote the communities they serve. This involves ensuring they have the staffing and appropriate expertise to address the needs of families and the community. All of this contributes to exceptional engagement with families and the community served by the school.

To bring this section to a close, the inclusive leader must uphold an equality practice, meaning to fully acknowledge and respect differences of gender, ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds, disabilities, and related sources of personal identity. By establishing an anti-discriminatory practice, the inclusive leader must actively attempt to promote positive attitudes and behaviour, to challenge and change negative outlooks or actions on the basis of any group identities.

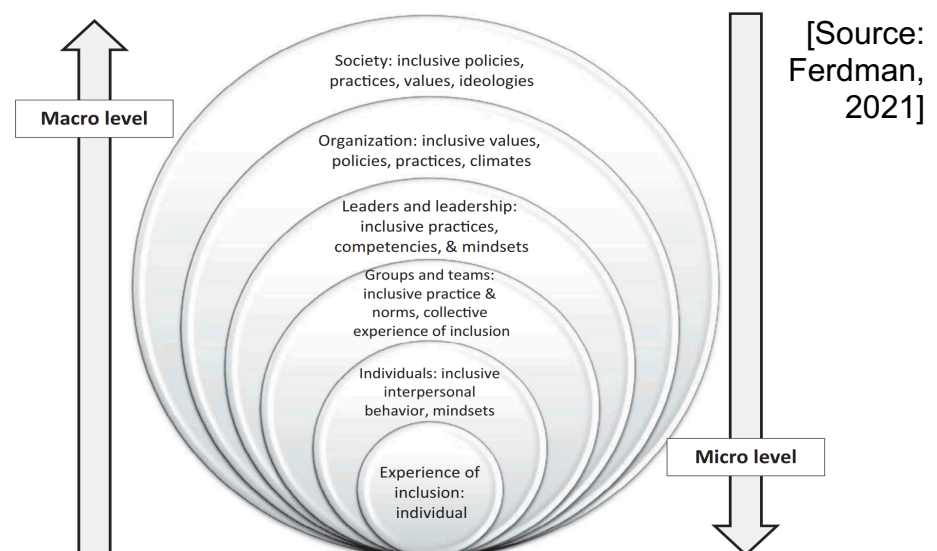
Section 2

This section highlights the importance of policies for services and settings for children and young people. In accordance with Smith *et al.* (2012:55) in 2005, when launching a new guide to developing policies for early years settings Steve Alexander, who was Chief Executive of the Pre-School Learning Alliance at the time, said it is the responsibility of all settings to provide high-quality services for parents and families with clear policies in place to ensure that parents are mindful how settings run, how their children will be cared for and their own responsibilities when using the service.

Waltham Forest Council (2019) also concur policies and procedures guide all staff working in the setting, promoting the well-being of all children, families, staff, volunteers, and those connected to the setting. When policies and procedures are thoroughly thought out and, most significantly, appropriately implemented, they provide common understanding and agreement on how the setting should be run. Kimberley (2017) affirms early years policies and procedures are fundamental to any childcare setting or organisation. By maintaining early years policies up to date is crucial to the health and wellbeing of children as they underpin all the practice that happens within the setting as well as it ensures that all the necessary legislation is met.

A Macro Policy this section cover is the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This Act involves public bodies in Wales to reflect on the long-term impact of their decisions, to work proficient with people, communities, and each other, and to avert persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change (Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, 2022a). Macroeconomic policies are involved with the operation of the economy as a whole. In broad terms, the goal of a macroeconomic policy is to provide a stable economic environment that is beneficial to fostering strong and sustainable economic growth, on which improve living standards (Dolamore, date unknown).

This can also be recognised in Ferdman's (2014) graphic representation of the multilevel systemic framework for inclusion (cited in Ferdman, 2021). In this model, inclusion is viewed as a practice with manifestation and elements of various levels of systems, from micro to macro. This means that inclusion can be created, strengthened, and sustained at each of all these levels.



The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 was decided upon following an extensive consultation, and passed into law in April 2015. With the intention of creating a more sustainable Wales, public bodies must now work towards seven Well-being Goals, and enact the Five Ways of Working, as stated by WCVA (2021), shown



in the diagram besides. Following the Five Ways of Working will encourage practitioners to work together more efficiently, avoid repeating past mistakes and tackle any continuing challenges we face today. These are: Long-term, Prevention, Integration, Collaboration, and Involvement (Welsh Government, 2015b:7).

As stated by WCVA (2021) and Welsh Government (2015b:7) long-term considers the significance of balancing short-term needs alongside the needs to uphold the ability to meet

long-term needs. Prevention stops problems from happening or getting worse and can help public bodies achieve their objectives. Integration reflects how the public body's well-being objectives could influence upon each of the well-being goals, on their objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies. Acting in collaboration with any other person that could support the body to meet its well-being objectives. Involvement implies the importance of including people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals and ensuring that they [the people] reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

Collaboration is the main factors in this section looking into how they empower inclusive leadership in the Early Years environment and what are the issues regarding the Way of Working. Firstly, collaboration is accelerated for each local authority area in Wales through the creation of Public Services Boards, consisting of local authorities, Local Health Boards, the Welsh Fire and Rescue Authority and other invited participants. All teams must work together to improve the economic, social, cultural, and environmental well-being of the area (WCVA, 2018:17).

Although collaboration could help meet well-being objectives (Welsh Government, 2015b:7) it also has difficulties implementing. Such as, time. WCVA (2018:17) asserts working in partnership with others to develop projects takes more time and effort than working alone and may involve conflict if there are different views on how situations can best be managed. Secondly, to affect the inclusive leader, organisations and networks can disturb relationships due to cultural mismatches of organisations, power differentials, underestimating the resources and time needed, confusion over roles and responsibilities and a lack of agreed shared positions or visions (WCVA, 2018:17).

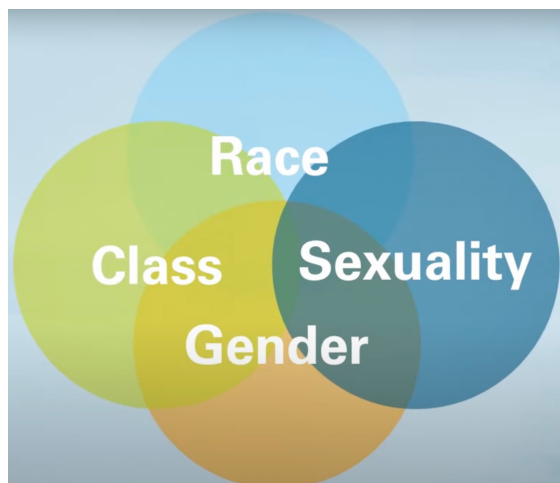
Communication is key with collaboration, as being a good communicator attributes to a successful leader. Smith *et al.* (2012:139) believes, active listening enables the leader to fully hear what is being communicated, pick up on key ideas, provide feedback and response, and focus on content. Welsh government (2022) asserts effective leaders should have good communication skills and model good listening skills and be prepared to take on board ideas and suggestions from team members. Leaders should also welcome collaborative working with a range of partners, including parents, carers, and others within the community, and involve them in decision-making, where appropriate.

The New Curriculum for Wales will begin implementation from 2022. As stated by Future Generations Wales (2021), its mission helps recognise the importance of the education system in building well-being citizens who, in turn, will be part of creating the Wales we want for future generations. It also provides a 'once-in-a-generation opportunity' to initiate well-being schools. In accordance with Future Generations Commissioner for Wales (2022b) and Up Rising Leadership (date unknown) in order to attain the aspirations of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, the Commissioner is dedicated to assisting and inspiring Wales' future leaders. The Future Generations Leadership Academy supports young people with opportunities to learn and heighten their leadership skills to ensure strong leadership in Wales today and in the future, and help to support and strengthen policy and practice across Wales

What is intersectionality and how can it benefit the inclusive leader?

Like multi-culturalism, inclusion values the coexistence of multiple values, perspectives, styles, and means of accomplishing goals within the same social system. However, it extends the focal dimensions of difference and further addresses their intersectionality (Ferdman, 2017:238-239 cited in Ferdman, 2021). The term intersectionality was devised by legal scholar and UCLA law professor Kimberlé W. Crenshaw (Kwak, 2021). Learning for Justice (2016) defines intersection as a place where things come together and refers to the reality that we all have multiple identities that intersect to make us who we are. Whereas Centre for Prevention MN (2021) defines intersectionality refers to the way race, gender, class and sexuality and other parts of who we are overlap with one another.

[Source:
Centre for
Prevention
MN, 2021]



People from different backgrounds experience the world differently. However, it is also intended to be practical and can be used within the early years sector to develop an awareness of prejudices, acknowledge differences, and develop positive attitudes about diversity. (Centre for Prevention MN, 2021; and Vollans, 2020).

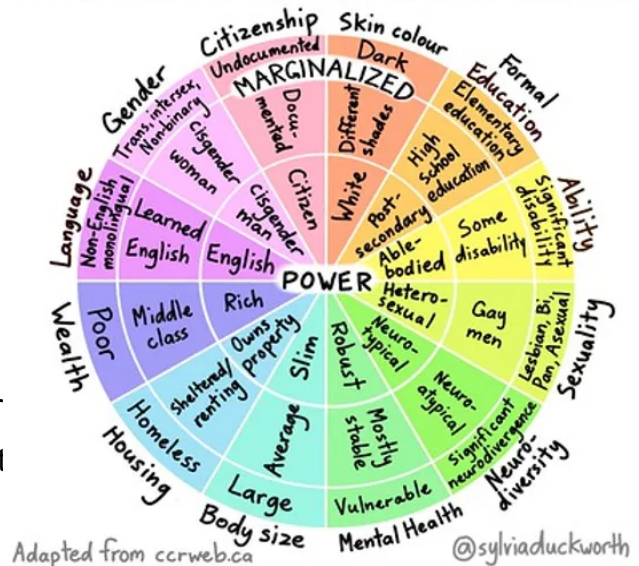
According to Kwak (2021) intersectional pedagogy urges educators to understand that identities and experiences fuse on one another and should take those identities and experiences into consideration when developing curricula and in their teaching practices. As a result, Vollans (2020) affirms practitioners can help children to become more positive about their own identity and become more confident and resilient.

As stated by Kimberlé Crenshaw (National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), 2019) African American girls are six times more likely to be suspended than white girls. This is a result of an either a race or gender problem. Crenshaw encourages people to reflect how the divergence of race or gender stereotypes might

actually play out in the classroom between students and teachers or and other students.

Intersectionality helps illuminate how parts of who we are come together to decide who has power in our society and who does not (Centre for Prevention MN, 2021). The illustration of Wheel of Power can help adults get more intricate visualisation of what the term 'marginalisation' represents. The further you are from power, the more unimportant you feel (Eliot, 2020).

WHEEL OF POWER/PRIVILEGE



[Source:
Eliot,
2020]

Intersectionality theory examines how matrices of power and interwoven structures of oppression shape and influence people's multiple identities. Wyatt *et al.* (2022) reminds us that people's lives cannot be clarified by taking into account single categories, such as gender, race, sexuality, or socio-economic status.

However, according to VeneKlassen and Miller, 2002, cited in Miller *et al.*, 2006:7-9), power can be positive. People who have 'power within' believe they are able to make positive changes in their own lives which can build self-confidence, which is often linked to faith and culture. These people are often known as 'empowered'. Leadbetter (2002:201) continues to express, empowerment absorbs a shift of power or emphasis towards meeting the needs and rights of those who otherwise would be marginalised. Leadership empower and transform individuals, as Greenleaf (2003:15) emphasises 'true leadership emerges from those whose primary motivation is a desire to help others'

Miles and Ainscow (2011) state, there is a body of critical literature weighing the problems and complexities which arise when schools attempt to move towards greater inclusion. Richards, *et al.* (2007) affirms practitioners can help children by creating a classroom where all students, regardless of their cultural and background, are

welcomed, supported and provided with the best opportunity to learn. Welsh Government (2022:44) also recognise that children are influenced by their environment and the adults around them as they learn from everything they see, hear, and do. Therefore, it is the responsibility of all adults, including the inclusive leader, to influence children's development positively by constructing an accessible and inclusive environment in the setting, one that values and celebrates everyone.

However, to foster a school environment that embraces diversity and inclusion (Reza, 2021) the inclusive leader can follow 5 steps encouraged by Bortini, *et al.* (2018). For inclusion to happen there has to be the acknowledgement and value of everybody's inherent worth, an approach based on human rights, awareness of interconnection, the role of power in inclusive leadership, and courage to share and take over responsibility.

Conclusively, human lives are multi-dimensional. People's lives and realities are shaped by different factors and social dynamics working together. Therefore, when someone inhabits several marginalized intersections, their individual-level experiences reflect social and structural systems of power, privilege, and inequality.

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