

Catalytic Leadership Portfolio

ECEY6003

Content

Section 1:

Provide a critical analysis of catalytic leadership and how the challenging nature of leading and managing early years provision ensures that the early years workforce is equipped to meet the complex demands of sociological factors and issues that impact on young children's lives

Section 2:

Whilst considering historical political contexts, provide a comparative and critical exploration of how children's rights and the appointment of Children's Commissioners across the UK have impacted on early childhood

Section 3:

Choose ONE sociological aspect that challenges children's life experiences and provide a critical evaluation of the early interventions and services that are in place to support your chosen aspect

References

Section 1

Leadership can mean different things to different people therefore sometimes making it hard to define. Often, leadership is mistaken for management even though the two are quite different. Management refers to a particular person being appointed to have control over a team of people based on their own specific skills and knowledge; however, leadership consists of a person motivating, encouraging and working alongside their team to achieve a goal.

Leadership is about supporting yourself and others as a team and guiding your team to achieve a quality setting. Leaders should not only set out directions for their team but should continuously support their team in an efficient way to achieve the goals they have set out.

A catalytic leader needs to be a motivating, forward-thinking person who can encourage their team around them. These leaders need to be able to communicate across teams and areas of the setting to achieve the highest aspirations. This can be done by providing a safe learning and working environment where staff feel comfortable to work and teach children. Also, catalytic leaders encourage staff to challenge themselves and try new things to build confidence and develop their skills and knowledge (Powers, 2017). Laurie M (2019) believes that:

“As catalysts, leaders unleash energy throughout the system. They do this in four primary ways: remove roadblocks that prevent empowered teams from bringing ideas to reality; foster connections across the organization; help people connect what they’re working on to the organization’s vision and aspiration; and finally, encourage an inclusive and welcoming environment of wholeness, where people can bring their authentic selves to the office, work in energizing and sustainable ways, and pursue the full range of their personal and professional aspirations.”

However, Salimi (no date) feels that this statement is vague and there should be more concrete aims to become a catalytic leader also that to be a successful leader people need to have a number of attributes.

To become a catalytic leader, one must master the skills of any good leader, these skills can be learnt through working in a productive setting and also attending leadership courses or programs. Many of these courses and programs involve the person to be an active listener, providing feedback, collaborative, building trust and aligning their actions with strategies. To become a catalytic leader, they must also try to bring the best out of their work team by providing positive and critical feedback, creating a happy, safe work environment, encourage the team to try new things and finding out what motivates each individual (Powers, 2017).

Every leader should have a vision and how they will achieve that vision. However, if this leader is not skilled at planning and initiating change it can cause confusion and distrust for some staff, even if the staff are usually confident and comfortable with change. Also, a common mistake made by people aiming to be catalytic leaders is that they sometimes jump straight from a plan to initiating the action. This is usually because they are often ready to move on straight away as it is a plan implemented by themselves, however, many of the other staff need more guidance to be able to implement the new plan, otherwise they will be left confused and may fall behind with their work. Therefore, a catalytic leader must ensure plenty of time is taken to understand the new plan and to then implement the plan within the workplace (Lalonde, 2022)

Socioeconomic factors include employment, education, income, safety in the community and social support. These factors impact a person's ability to provide care and support for themselves and children. Having a stable job does not just provide an income but people can also have the benefits of health insurance, supported opportunities to progress and paid sick leave. However, each of these benefits usually are greater for people in higher paid jobs which are more often held by people with a higher education. Working in a safe environment can also be beneficial to a person's mental well-being. "Those who are unemployed face greater challenges to health and well-being. From research carried out by Finch (2021) it was found that "while the unemployment rate was estimated at 5.1% in January 2021, the highest rates were among young people aged 18–24 (14.0%), people with lower qualifications (7.8%) and people from minority ethnic groups (7.6%). Also in January 2021, 43% of unemployed people had poor mental health." A person's income shapes a person's choices on housing, education and childcare. Receiving an income provides a person with options to

have healthy lifestyle choices. However, “poor families and individuals are most likely to live in unsafe homes and neighborhoods, often with limited access to healthy foods, employment options, and quality schools,” (County Health Rankings, 2022). Continuous stress over income and poverty can cause physical and mental health issues. Between 2010 and 2014 in Wales, the life expectancy of men was nine years lower and the life expectancy of women was seven years lower than those in less deprived areas (British Medical Association, 2017). There has been a sixty percent increase of unemployment within the UK since 2006. However, even the people that are employed can still be living in poverty. Data collected by the Office of National Statistics found that in 2014 one out of five employees in the UK received low pay. Employees that receive low pay usually are temporary staff, women and employees in lower skilled occupations.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs model in 1943 shown that for individuals to be satisfied, the lowest tier of needs must be fulfilled for then the higher levels to be attended to. However, Maslow altered his view on this and believed then that each need does not require 100 percent satisfaction to emerge onto the next need tier. Each person has the capability to move up the hierarchy towards a level of self-actualisation. Many life experiences such as redundancy or divorce can disrupt the progress to meet lower levels and can cause a person to fluctuate between levels. The need for food, water, shelter and clothing are the biological requirements for humans. If these needs are not met all other needs become secondary (McLeod, 2020).

Poverty is a complex problem and there is not a best way to measure poverty. Poverty is when someone cannot afford basic needs such as food, water, shelter and clothing. However, poverty is not only about having little money, “Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job, is fear for the future, living one day at a time (Brunswick, no date). Living in poverty can have a major impact on children’s health, emotional and cognitive development and also educational outcomes. The Royal College of Pediatrics and Child Health carried out a survey in 2017 and found that two thirds of doctor interviewed stated that low income and poverty contribute to poor health of children. Many

children living in poverty may not have access to the same opportunities as other children their age.

Section 2

The lives of children have been affected and changed over the years by many historical events. Some of these events have had a positive impact on children, however many have negatively impacted them. As stated on the Imperial Wartime Museum (2022) website “One in five schools was damaged by bombing, and air raids frequently stopped lessons for hours, leading to a decline in attendance.” In 1939 to 1945 during the Second World War many children were evacuated out of big cities and sent to the countryside which would have brought substantial changes to their lives. For the majority of the children, it was a time of fear and distress from being separated from families and had caused major disruption to their lives. Simkin (2021) says that “The government eventually accepted that evacuation had caused serious problems for education. In November 1939 Neville Chamberlain announced that some schools in industrial cities would be reopened in order to provide an education for those children who had not become evacuees.”

As the war progressed it had also disrupted education, the evacuation of the children had upset the school system for many months. Some schools chose to stay open and converted basements into classrooms, however teachers and resources were in short supply. Male teachers were made to join the armed forces which gave rise to a shortage of school staff. Before the war the majority of children left school at the age of 14. However, the 1944 Education Act that came into effect after the war, introduced free secondary school education and a school leaving age of 15 (IWM, 2022). In 1941 the government provided 95% grant to local authorities to enable the provision of free school meals, but along with the disruption to education children from poorer families had lost their free school meals and milk. The Education Act of 1944 had made it statutory that schools provide milk and meals for all children that attended the school.

The Act was introduced across England and Wales to better educational standards and it required local authorities to provide a development plan for primary, secondary and further education. There was also a requirement for secondary schools to provide education for all and that there were no fees to attend public schools (Britannica, no date). During the Second World War the usual school medical inspections ceased and there was a dramatic increase of children with scabies. Sir William Beveridge presented the British Parliament with a report in 1942. It was a summary of the need to banish poverty which he stated that it should come into action after the war. Beveridge (1942) announced that “Now, when the war is abolishing landmarks of every kind, is the opportunity for using experience in a clear field. A revolutionary moment in the world's history is a time for revolutions, not for patching.”

The NHS was the first health system to provide free medical care which was established under the National Service Act of 1946. This was also based upon Beveridge's recommendations in his 1942 report. The NHS was launched by Aneurin Bevan, the Minister of Health in Park Hospital, Manchester. This motivation to provide free health care was due to various figures believing that the then current health service was insufficient. The main values of this new health service were that the service helped everyone and that this health service was free to all. During the early years of the NHS costs were exceeding previous expectations and it was considered that prescriptions would incur a cost to people to help cover the rise of costs. New availability of drugs in the 1960s brought along a strong period of growth for the NHS (Brain, no date). As years passed many changes occurred but the NHS was always prioritised as a critical mainstay service. Many believe the NHS has exceeded expectations however they are still facing crisis due to funding and demand.

The Education Act of 1870 was the first legislation for the provision of education. The Education Act of 1944 brought many changes to education including increasing the leaving age of school and removing the charge fees to attend secondary school. The 1944 Education Act brought mixed views on the impact it had on working class people. By raising the leaving age and abolishing the cost for attending state schools, more working-class children were able to attend secondary school and receive an education. However, many working-class children were unable to access further private teaching to support them for the eleven plus exams. The

children that did not pass the exam had to attend a secondary modern school instead of a secondary grammar school, therefore many people felt that these children received a lesser education (WCML, no date). In 1970 the Education Act stated that local education authorities had a responsibility to educate all children with disabilities or additional needs within mainstream schools. Following on from the 1970 act, the Education Act of 1981 was influenced by the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People. The main adjustments in this act were changes in terminology; 'pupils with special education needs' should be used instead of 'handicapped'. This was adjusted to encourage a better integrated provision in education. This act provided rights and safeguards for children in education that have been identified with a 'special need'. However, this act did not provide a clear definition of what 'special education needs' are (Macfarlane, no date). In 1996 the Education Act stated that local education authorities must make provisions for children that are unable to attend school due to illness or exclusion so that they are able to access suitable education.

In 2002 the Education Act introduced the roles and responsibilities of staff to safeguard children from abuse and neglect. Everyone working within an education setting must create and maintain a safe learning environment and help children develop understanding and resilience. Staff must aim to identify children's welfare concerns and they must take action and follow the correct protocol to address the situation and share this concern. Any staff that work with children must have basic child protection training, so they are able to recognise and respond to welfare concerns (Welsh Government, 2008).

The Children Act of 2004 also was set in place to protect children's welfare. The act places a duty on the local authorities to improve children's physical and mental health and well-being, education and social and economic well-being (Welsh Government, 2015). The act's main purpose was to create a safer place for children by appointing a Children's Commissioner and directors for children's services to share guidance and support to education settings. The principles of this act were to help children succeed and to allow children to be healthy and stay in a safe environment. This Act also works with Children's Trusts, which are independent bodies not associated with government bodies such as Health and Social Services. It aims to support and provide co-operation and stronger relationships between teachers, parents and carers who

may not always welcome intervention or support from outside sources. A fund designed to eliminate poverty and financial hardship for those in disadvantaged circumstances. This should aim to enable children to maintain attendance at an education setting between the ages of 5-13 years (iHASCO, 2020). Each of these points within the Act aim to provide the best care, support and protection for children and that any person working with children has a responsibility to safeguard and share welfare concerns.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child consists of 54 articles which set out political, civil, social and cultural rights of each child. The first declaration of these children rights was written by Eglantyne Jebb in 1923. The Welsh Government (2019) believes that “The rationale for the UNCRC is that children’s rights need specific consideration due to the special care and protection often needed by children and young people.” There are four main principles that are underpinning each right of the UNCRC; the right to be heard, the right to life and development, no discrimination and to have the best interest of the child (Livens, no date).

Many children’s lives have been transformed since the introduction of the UNCRC and as recognised by the 2021 United Nations Committee, a digital environment can also provide many positive impacts for a child. A child with access to digital technology is able to explore their personality and express themselves, learn and play and also communicate with family and friends. This has a direct link to Article 17 of the UN Convention (1989) “Every child has the right to reliable information from a variety of sources, and governments should encourage the media to provide information that children can understand. Governments must help protect children from.”

Under this convention, governments must meet the requirement of providing support and meeting each child's individual needs and aid children to reach their full potential. The Welsh Government is committed to underpinning the Children’s Rights within Welsh Law, including the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure of 2011. When ministers develop new legislation and policy, they have a duty to take into account the UNCRC due to this measure of 2011. However, if schools to not comply with the United Nations Rights of the Child

under their own policies and legislation, complaints can be made which will then be taken forward by the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

"The Children's Commissioner for Wales is an independent champion for the children and young people in Wales," (SSCE, no date). Their role includes working for every child up to the age of 18 or the age of 25 if the person has been in care and is still in education. The role and responsibility of the Children's Commissioner is to listen to children's views on what is important to them, advises them and their carers if they have been mistreated and is the voice for children and young people on important issues. The Children's Commissioner also informs children and young people of their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Wales' previous Children's Commissioners were Peter Clarke from 2001 until 2008 and following on from him came Keith Towler, 2008 until 2015. Wales' current Children's Commissioner is Sally Holland. Sally Holland is currently campaigning to change the law so children are able to have the same protection from assault as adults. Some of her work has involved improving anti-bullying strategies, supporting children's mental health and well-being and reducing inequality. Sally Holland has also set out clear steps for the government to reduce child poverty and ensured that organisations prioritise children and young people's rights when designing and implementing services.

Section 3

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic events that happen during childhood between the ages of 0-17 years. Cocoran and McNulty (2018) believes that "adverse childhood experiences are "traumatic events (e.g., sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse) or chronic stressors (e.g., neglect, parental separation) that are uncontrollable to the child." Similarly, the Welsh Government (2021) states that "Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) refer to traumatic events or circumstances which happen in childhood which can lead to poorer outcomes across the life course."

In England in 2014 it was found that 47% of people have experienced at least one ACE and that around 9% of people have experienced 4 or more ACEs (Bellis et al, 2014). In comparison, a survey on Adverse Childhood Experiences was carried out in 2015 across Wales and found that similarly to England, 47% of people had experienced at least one ACE however, 14% of people in Wales had experienced 4 or more ACEs (Ashton et al, 2016).

Each of these Adverse Childhood Experiences fall under three wider categories including Abuse, Neglect and Household Dysfunctions. Abuse can be in the forms of sexual abuse where a sexual act or sexual behaviour has been forced upon by an adult, relative or stranger without consent. Physical abuse is a non-accidental injury inflicted on a child from kicking, hitting, burning etc. Also, emotional abuse where an adult has insulted or swore at a child or have acted in a way which made the child afraid that the adult will cause them harm. Neglect comes in two forms: physical neglect and emotional neglect. Physical neglect is where a parent or carer fails to meet the basic needs of a child, such as providing food and shelter. However, emotional neglect is where the parent or carer disregards or ignores a child's emotions or emotional needs. Household dysfunctions include mental illness of a household member, drug or alcohol abuse, parental separation, domestic abuse, and incarceration of a family member.

Being exposed to ACEs can cause toxic stress and this prolonged stress can affect a child's brain development, including the duration of time they can focus during lessons and also their response to stress. Kahn and Vezzuto's theory behind Adverse Childhood Experiences believes that ACEs can lead to neurobiological impacts which can develop into long-term health problems. They believe that the greater the impact the more serious consequences to lifelong health and wellbeing (Kahn and Vezzuto, 2015). It can increase the risk of developing a chronic disease at a later age such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes and a survey carried out in Wales found that "those with four or more ACEs were 3 times more likely to develop heart disease and 4 times more likely to develop Type 2 diabetes compared to those with no ACEs" (Ashton, 2016). ACEs can put pressure on a developing brain which can increase learning problems within a school, a pupil experiencing this pressure may exhibit clingy or isolating behaviour. They may complain of tummy aches and headaches or have regressive behaviours such as bed wetting (Brouse, 2020). These behaviours can affect their access to education and

then impact their academic growth. Therefore, school leaders must ensure that learning environments feel safe for the pupils and that staff can build healthy relationships between them and the pupils.

Leaders need to ensure there is a whole school approach to promoting a caring and supportive environment. Schools can do this by strengthening social and emotional skills between staff and pupils, supporting students physical and mental health needs and ensuring that activities do not restrict pupil access (Murphey et al, 2019)

Brouse (2020) believes that “A student impacted by trauma will need both teachers and school officials who believe in restorative practices rather than zero-tolerance policies to support a child exhibiting undesirable behaviors.” Dealing with misbehaviour using restorative practice enables the pupil to explain their thoughts and reasons for their behaviour through questions. These questions may include:

- What happened?
- How were you feeling at the time?
- What could you do next time?

The response to misbehaviour is always positive and will depend on the nature of the misdemeanour and the age and maturity of the pupils (Llanrhidian Primary, 2021). By carrying out restorative practice in this way it allows the pupils to be listened to and can also make them aware of the effect that their actions can have. Focusing on using restorative practices can help repair harm or conflict done to individuals and can help repair relationships. Murphy (2021) feels that “Strong peer and teacher relationships that are developed and maintained by restorative practices can help teachers and the wider school community to understand every student’s individual needs.” Restorative practice can have a positive impact on the overall behavior and attendance within the school. This form of support will only be effective if it is taken as a whole school approach so that there is continuity throughout and that the pupils are supported in each learning environment by all members of staff. A school leader must ensure that the staff have accessed adequate training on how to use restorative practices within the

setting to ensure that they are supporting each pupil effectively and in line with the school's policies and guidelines.

Brouse (2020) also believes that “safely building resilience for children will be one of the best lessons you can impart on them to overcome the potential long-term effects of ACEs.” Growth mindset is a learning theory developed by Carol Dweck which revolves around the belief that intelligence, ability and performance can be improved. Helping pupils develop a growth mindset can support children to become resilient, healthy, confident individuals. Growth mindset can involve features of praise, feedback and self-regulation. Praising the pupil's efforts and developments can give them a sense of achievement and that their efforts are acknowledged; also, along with feedback pupils can be encouraged to ask and act on their feedback so they are aware of areas of strengths and areas of improvements. Self-regulation focuses on understanding why they feel a certain way and why and how they may react to feeling certain emotions. Downey (2008) says that “students are most successful within the classroom when students are held accountable for their actions and are told that they are responsible for their learning/success.” If pupils are taught how to express certain emotions or fears through discussions with staff, it can help pupils to not act out behaviourally. Also, by giving the pupils strategies to use to help them self-regulate it can support them to regulate without emphasising negative behaviour. However, this strategy supports learners best when they are able to acknowledge their emotions that they are feeling and are able to understand what can make them feel a certain way. Pupils that are unable to do so can find it hard to know what strategies they can use to help them self-regulate, also children that are non-verbal may struggle with this strategy as they cannot always communicate in what they need to support them. A school leader needs to ensure that for these pupil's resources are freely available in each learning environment so that the pupils can independently go to self-regulate.

Nurture groups are used as an early year's intervention to support pupils with social, emotional and behavioural needs by developing positive pupil relationships. Nurture involves the adult and child listening and responding to one another through verbalised engagement activities such as play, mealtimes and reading. From research carried out in 2007 it was found that there were a total of 101 nurture groups throughout educational settings in Wales (Welsh

Government, 2010). To ensure success, school staff and governors need to be aware of the purpose of the nurture groups and what is wanted to be achieved. Staff will require training to be able to successfully deliver the nurture groups. Staff have to be chosen carefully to ensure they will offer the children the best support. A four-day course can be undertaken by staff to ensure they receive adequate practice and theory.

Queens University in Belfast undertook an evaluation of the impact of nurture groups and found that they were having a “significant effect improving social, emotional and behavioural outcomes amongst children who previously had difficulty learning within a mainstream school” (Sloan et al, 2016). In addition, Cooper (2001) found that “there was an increase of pupil enjoyment of school, improved attitude to school and learning and increased attendance and improvements in friendships.” However, research shows that older children show more improvement in academic skills from attending nurture groups and younger children improve emotionally and socially. Therefore, these nurture groups do not work or support every pupil and work in different ways (Smith, 2019).

Murphey (2019) says that “these approaches are not about singling out students who have experienced adversity, but about shifting the culture, norms, and practices of an entire school to create a safe and supportive learning environment for all students.”

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