

Throughout this essay I will be discussing how a leadership style can impact on the quality of the provision provided by an early years setting and the retention of a workforce by synthesising and critiquing the three main traditional leadership styles; the democratic style, the autocratic style and laissez -faire.

According to Marquet (2013) he believes leadership is a process by which a person influences other to accomplish an objective. Hadfield, M., Jopling, M & Needham, M. (2015) and Marquet (2013) state an effective leader will lead a setting by recognising the strengths and weaknesses of their team and empowering their employees through delegating tasks within their interests. By doing so, it will maintain a high quality of service and operate within the best interest of the stakeholders which in this case are the parents of the children attending the early years settings. Good leaders will emphasise that the contributions of their workforce are valued as a means of building good working relationships. (Rodd, 2010:145). Moyles (2006) states that an effective leader must have professional attributes, leadership qualities and management skills in order to lead a team effectively to provide a high-quality service and attain a workforce. He believes that by providing a high quality of service the children will have greater positive experiences and gain the foundations needed to enhance their education. Despite all three of the leadership styles differing from one another Hadfield, Jopling and Needham (2015) agrees with Moyles (2006) and highlights that a leader that adopts any style will need have effective communication and enter the zone of adaptability by coming up with innovative strategies to further and adapt the early years setting which I hand with influence the quality of the provision. (Cotter, 2004).

Having reflected on the process of working within a group, it was evident that we naturally adopted aspects of both a democratic and laissez faire approach. This was seen by all members of the team participating and valuing each other opinions which Lyus (1999) argues is important to consider when adopting a democratic style. All members within the group were patients, responsive and share a common vision which supports Aubrey (2010) and Ravanfar (2015) evaluation of Mckinskey theory, which also link with the attributes of a democratic leadership style. Despite St. Thomas University (2014) arguing that a laissez fair approach is known to be the least productive, by being a small group and not a large early year setting we were able to be flexible and respect each others views, this was demonstrated by each member

having the freedom to choose their individual roles and topics for discussion based on their natural interests. (Chaudhry and Javed, 2012). This element of our meeting worked effectively as we were all self-motivating characters with extensive knowledge and diverse experiences within an educational environment, specifically in managerial roles whereby working within a team was natural. The Path Goal Theory (1998) and Neugebauer (1985) all believe that being supportive and participative are both skills of becoming effective motivators which are attributes of a democratic leader and in line with Maslow (1943) theory of human motivation. Some aspect of distributed leadership skills was evident as all shared a common vision and shared thinking process when dispersing to researching individual points of discussion for the meeting with no need for delegation. (Hallet, 2013). Following this we all gathered our information in an inclusive manner. However, there was a challenge of not being able to have as much desired face to face contact time as we had hoped due to personal circumstance and busy schedules. In this instance, there was no need to adopt an autocratic approach and dictate when we could meet as our challenges were foreseeable by us all living in different areas, the use of communication via technology helped us overcome this. To Concur, it is evident that prior to any extensive research being carried out that a leader will adopt several different attributes and characteristics from several styles in order to deal with different situations in the best manner.

Having done further research, the leadership style for further analysis will be a democratic style, it is said to be the most beneficial for the leaderships styles in leading an early years setting as it involves an effective way to manage a team in an empowering manner, However, Cook (2013) states that this can also be a downfall of a democratic styles as valuing each employees opinion and not following an autocratic command can often be timing consuming. A traditional democratic leader will use their skills to instil confidence in their employees by supporting them with relevant courses provided by National Day Nursery Association (NDNA) and Children Partnership (2018) within their interests and demonstrate good practice for them to follow. (Campbell-Barr and Leeson, 2016). Effective leadership is widely accepted as being a 'key constituent in achieving organisational improvement' (Cited in Muijs et al 2004:2). As a result of this, Rodd (2019) states the main advantage of a leader adopting a democratic style is that it will empower the employee to feel valued by investing in them which often leads to a good working relationship and leads to a lower

turnover. However, it is important to note, Jameson and Watson (2001) believe that by a leader investing and developing their team to gain higher qualifications it often costs money and time and all skills can be lost if the employee leaves the setting.

Aubrey 2011 voices that happy and confident employees will also have a positive and long-term effect on children. Pengreen (2017) and Personal Progression Strategies will also ensure that a leader is pushing their workforce to their best abilities and broadening their experiences and knowledge through relevant courses such a messy play and storytelling session which isn't a statutory requirement within early years, rather a continuous development and unique selling point for the company. As a result of this, Pengreen (2017) believes the employee will be able to address the individual needs of the children and respect their voice and rights and therefore provide a high quality of care in line with the Foundation Phase (2008) and Abbott, L., Langston, A. (2005). By employees recognising their staff achievements, Northouse (2010) states it is also another form of empowerment and increases the self-esteem, morale and wellbeing of the employee which encourages them to stay with the setting. This is vital within an early year setting as a staff member will be more enthusiastic and enhance the learning experience of the child by capture the interest of the children more readily.

Johnson (2015) and Lindon et al (2016) also states that a democratic style realises heavily on the leader having experience and knowledge on their employees or that an open door policy is implemented and that employees can approach the leader and share their strength and weaknesses through a SWOT analysis. Belbin (2015) acknowledges that having several individuals from diverse backgrounds collaborating can cause conflict. However, within his philosophy, he also believes that this can be minimised by the team valuing their differences and places and emphasis on creativity and inclusion. An open-door policy with both employees and stakeholders can lead to positive relationships being built. (Rose and Rogers, 2012). Elfer et al (2003) promotes the importance of good working relationships with parents and employees when leading an early year setting as often, a good reputation regenerates future business as well as being able to resolve any conflict at the earliest convenience. Sadek and Sadek (2001) highlights that this can be achieved by a democratic leader making themselves consistently available by placing themselves on the shop floor with the employees and children or carrying out daily handovers with parents.

Despite a democratic approach listening to the voice of the child, the pedagogical approach would also be beneficial for a manager leading an early year setting. This approach considers and involves the wider community which is vital when liaising with multi-agencies and adopting a child centred approach. (Murray and McDowall Clark, 2013). However, research suggest that the pedagogical approach has been heavily criticised for its ambiguity as the term 'pedagogy' has several differentiations in different countries. In England 'pedagogy' refers to how subjects are taught within the curriculum, whereas the definition in Germany has been extended over time and is closely linked with social pedagogy. Whereas Moss (2006) and Kyriakou et al (Cited in Male and Palaiologou, 2015:1) defines pedagogy as a 'rational and holistic approach to working with children and young people' with the emphasis that a pedagogy leader will go 'beyond the subject of learning' and enhance the child's development further. Whalley (2011) believes that the reaction children have with a leader and relationships built with parents will clear portray how effective a democratic leader will operate within the pedagogy approach. Hallet (2014) and O'Sullivan (2010) both agree that the pedagogical approach instils motivation, creativity and innovation as understanding the voice of the child and upholding the Conventions stated in the Rights of the Child ensures that everything has a purpose and children are valued. Furthermore, this synthesis with Reggio Emilia philosophy to focus on the best interest of the child by following their lead in learning and emphasis the role of the adult as a facilitator.

When working in a childcare environment, the leader will also have to liaise with outside multi-agencies, Anning et al (2006) and Gasper (2010) believe that this as vital when adopting a child centred approach and provides all employees and parents with a focus and a plan to enhance the level of care and development of the child within the setting to the highest possible level.

Despite a democratic style being the most influential on an early years setting, Gasper (2010) highlights the importance of the leader reflecting on practice as a way of minimising complacency and enhance practice further by evaluating more effective working strategies that promote the voice of the child's and continuous development. The reflective method also support the self-assessment of service statement, also know as the SASS report carried out early years settings whereby the leader will gather the feedback of its team, parents and children in order to evaluate how effective

the services provided are. Davis and Ryder (2016), states this element of the leadership is important as often addressing the needs and suggestions of parents and employees will provide new ideas and improved practice and therefore ensure the parents feel respected. (Miller, Drury, Cable, 2012). Supervisions and appraisals are also a statutory requirement that allows a democratic leader the opportunity to recognise the strengths of their employees and address any areas that need improving. (Fitzgerald, 2004) However, it is important to note as mentioned by Lindon and Lindon (2012) that the democratic approach within this instance is only effective if the leader is confident and has some authoritative traits as seen within an autocratic style. Rasli (2013) explain that a good leader will understand what approach to use when needed.

Within an early year setting it is vital that a leader takes responsibility and care for their employees and children; with the goal of developing continuously and remain competitive by adapt the setting. Isles-Buck, E., Newstead, S. (2004) and Johnson (2014) agrees with one another and proposes that continuous development is achievable by a leader keeping up to date with relevant initiative, schemes and changes to; laws, frameworks and legislations that effect early years settings. Therefore, it is paramount that a leader despite their individual leadership approach is aware of The Children Act 1989 and the need for policies and procedures of Care Inspector Wales (CIW)(2018) and Estyn (2018) that govern early years setting in order to remain compliant with National Minimum Standards (NMS)(2018) and place the duty of care towards children at the centre of their ethos. CIW And Estyn inspections assessing the level of service provided and focusing on key element are is also a means of monitoring if the leader is upholding and reviewing policies.

As a democratic leader it is important to communicate change to parents and employees so that they know where they stand and can follow the vision of the company, as ambiguity can cause employees to lose trust in a leader and influence their decisions to leave the setting. By adopting some aspects of a transactional leadership, it will provide focus on tasks and maintenance of skill and therefore ensuring that the company remains competitive by bidding of the Flying Start (date) programme or Sue Start if in England (date) or registering the early years setting for the 30 hour free childcare offer wales (2019). O' Sullivan (2015) believes that this plays a vital part in early years settings and addressing the governments targets of reducing

poverty in families by providing opportunities of education for children. Despite O'sullivan (2015) recognising the uncertain problems that leaders will face when adopting new government initiatives, it will help the company to control the political element of their pestle analysis and encourage parents to take up their services.

Despite a democratic approach being highlighted throughout as the most effective in leading an early years setting, Lindon and Lindon (2012) argues that an autocratic approach is needed when dealing with a critical incident as there is need for someone to take a stance and ensure that decisions are made quickly and effectively in order to deal with the matter, a laissez-fair or democratic approach would not be effective in this instance. (Luys, 1999 and O'sullivan 2015). Lindon and Lindon states that an authoritarian leader is often described as being controlling as they will make decisions independently with little or no input from their employees. Which is effective in a situation whereby safeguarding is an issue, and clear tasks and expectations need to be met in a timely manner in order to protect the child from further harm.

A distributed leadership is also another approach that synthesises with a democratic style as they both value the team's strengths. This can be seen by a leader trusting their employees with additional responsibilities and empowering them by recognising their commitment to the company and valuing them through pay incentive or bonus schemes. In New Zeland and Australia , this approach increased teachers understanding of the purpose of reflecting and their pedagogical knowledge. It was seen that teachers understood the children better which allowed them to reflect directly on how their interaction affected their learning and enhance the quality of the provision. Gronn and Hamilton (cited in Heikka, Waniganayake and Hujala, 2012) states that shared leadership can intensifies the work load both emotionally and cognitively, however in turn does spread the risk and accountability of a leader and provides more opportunities for mistakes to be picked up.

To Conclude, the democratic leadership style is the most beneficial when managing an early year setting for the reasons mentioned above. However, as Moss and Petrie (2002) emphasises, no leadership style is greater than one another and believe that an effective leader will adapt with style to their current workforce in order to project an effective early year setting.

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