

Catalytic Leadership

This Assignment is based on critically analyzing the concept of Catalytic Leadership in early in years settings and the impact of sociological factors on children and young people. Secondly, it provides an overview of the role of Children's Commissioner in Wales, and evaluates the steps and policies created in order to promote children's rights and well-being. Finally, there is a critical evaluation of the sociological aspect that negatively affects the quality of children's life and support services available to that.

Section 1

According to Zachery (2011), a good leader is someone who evolves, generates, and inspires others' leadership abilities and improved performance and acts as a leadership catalyst. Catalytic people help their organisations become force multipliers by tremendously enhancing the leadership capability of the organisation. A catalyst in a chemical solution causes a reaction that allows the original materials to become more than they could on their own. Similarly, Catalytic Leadership encourages others to develop into more than they can become on their own. To describe a catalytic leadership that is cautious, connected, purposeful, and generative. The leadership concept draws on neuroscience, quantum physics, ontology, and cognitive psychology. Each of these components represents the leader's specific purpose and serves as a guide for them to be realistic, supportive, and efficient in producing results (Zachery, 2011).

There are different theories related to leadership. Modernist theory suggests the idea of the world can be logically understood as being ordered, structured, and governed by a collection of universal legislation and consistencies. Individuals at the 'top' of an organisational hierarchy have the most formal authority in modernist thought. Modernists envision a world with strict binaries, as evidenced by discussions of people being either leaders or followers. Postmodernism believes leadership is nonlinear and a circular process fraught with uncertainty. Postmodern notion departs significantly from modernism, most notably in destabilizing beliefs in universal objective 'truth' and conceptions of progress that assume rational, predictable forward movement. Unlike modernism, which believes leadership is hierarchical, ordered, and progressive (Joiner, No date).

The term "catalytic leadership" refers to a specific set of social justice leadership communication techniques developed in equal partnership with communities rather than for them. Ella Baker an African American human and civil rights activist serves as a great example of catalytic leadership. She believed in the power of common people to bring a tide of change in society. Ella supported the idea of student run-organization fought racism and she was the founder of Women Centre for leadership and Community Activism (Parker, 2020). Catalytic Leadership is a mindset that initiates a change and advances it with a powerful impact. Catalytic Leaders want to observe change in their environment, they take charge in changing situations and do not react impulsively. Attaway explained 12 key principles essential to become a Catalytic Leader in his book

called Catalytic Leadership: 12 Keys to Becoming an Intentional Leader Who Makes a Difference. Teachable spirit, perpetual optimism, fearless truth telling, reflective thinking, persistence and boldly action oriented are some of the key skills acquired by catalytic leaders (Attaway, 2022)

Research based on leadership in early childhood with consideration of social justice by states that leaders are unguarded risk takers ready to support others. They use their knowledge, truth, and power to recognize and challenge the gender, political and social inequalities in education providing leadership opportunities in early years of education. Considering early childhood is a diverse field that ranges from birth till the age of 8 years delivering wide range of direct services including infant and toddler groups, pre-school, family and parenting support, mental and health support etc. Leadership in early years is a combination of practical and pedagogical knowledge and using these skills to inspect, collaborate, reflect, and promote professional development. The early childhood education is suffering from the deficiency of leadership skills. However, there are certain barriers in the development of leadership skills such as professional feelings uncertainty towards the authorities, their limited opportunities to influence policy or collaborate with other professionals, the field's historically low pay rates, the low regard and value society places on teachers' and carers' skills, the absence of a professional career ladder, and other factors are all thought to hinder the development of leaders in the field. Furthermore, leadership roles are confined to the highest level of formal authority keeping them at a distance from the direct childcare worker, parents, and guardians. Since it requires navigating power dynamics and involves persuading oneself and others to change, leadership is fundamentally political. To evaluate how our personal and social beliefs, actions, and inactions benefit or condemn people other than ourselves, and to use this knowledge to adopt suitable adjustments to our leadership style. Without such standards, we face the risk that conditions might not significantly improve for our most vulnerable children, families, and workforce. Social Justice in Early years is a diversity informed practice that beliefs in uniqueness of a child (Gandolfi, H. and Mills, M. 2022) The stated purpose of social justice leadership, according to Theoharis (2007), a leader should be able to deal with strong resistance to take meaningful steps to change schools while keeping "equity and justice consciously in mind" to support every child student, but — especially marginalized students.

Numerous scholars conducted a study-based on a crisis in teacher retention due to many reasons which includes Work-life balance, deficit constructions of the in the media and by the government, and a lack of support for especially abled children and mass security of teachers and the "terrors of performativity". He suggests that teachers set aside any moral purposes of education or social justice principles to meet specific goals, performance indicators, and avoid unwanted scrutiny from senior staff, who are also a victim of similar scrutiny. Schools are thus not only places of learning, but also workplaces where employees may feel undervalued and silenced unless they support the current regimes. Many teachers believe that their profession is undervalued, and their experiences are exacerbated by forms of discrimination and oppression such as racism,

misogyny, and homophobia. Teachers were particularly sensitive to issues of social justice, not only in terms of their own professional experiences, but also in terms of their students' educational experiences and their purpose as teachers. While many teachers enter the profession with the intention of making a positive difference in children's lives. However, schools have narrow goals that do not extend beyond viewing children as human capital, that is, beyond the goal of maximizing their 'productivity.' The increasing and unwavering pursuit of normalization and differentiation, aided, for example, by the prevalence of high-stakes examinations and concerns about rankings in national and international testing regimes, exacerbates this view of modern schools as productivity machines and impediments to social justice ideals. While making sure that all students can thrive in school is undoubtedly a major goal, the question of what "excellence" is in modern education persists. Various pressures on schools to "succeed" against narrow criteria of "excellence" have had consequences for students deemed to be endangering both a school's reputation and others' learning.

According to Nicholson et al. (2018) leadership has become a culturally and socially informed powerful process, especially in early years setting the practitioners should have a critical understanding of the diversity of families to promote inclusive support (Nicholson et al., 2018). Similarly, Robinson (2017) also cited in education leadership has an exclusive role to play in and not limited to the idea of leaders and followers. Now a days the teachers have become facilitators that allow them to understand the uniqueness of every learner and connect with pupils. The role of a teacher is to understand and create an environment to require by children to flourish and maximize their learning potential. According to Robinson (2017) the role of government in education is not effective as it should be due to differences in ideas and opinion of ruling and previous government and ultimately, as they are not people working with children on daily basis. Therefore, the curriculum should be flexible and adaptable, and the teachers should be able to tailor it according to the needs of the child (Robinson, 2017). This has been agreed by Welsh Government (2023) each school is allowed to develop their own curriculum based on four core principals of ambitious capable learners' creative contributors, ethically informed citizens, healthy and confident individuals ready to become an active part of the society. Similarly, the Early Years Practitioner, leaders and managers are allowed to develop their own curriculum based on four core principles for learning focuses 27 different areas of learning (Welsh Government, 2023).

According to McDowall Clark, (2012). It is essential to promote catalytic leadership in early years settings as it is a common misconception among early years practitioner that leadership is only dependent on authoritative positions and if they are not at management level their views does not hold any values in the decision-making process. However, through catalytic leadership practitioners would develop a positive outlook of the management, resulting in trust, cooperation of staff and improved childcare services for children. To conclude, the concept of catalytic leadership in Early Years settings is catalyzing the improvements and the overall quality of education. Under the umbrella of catalytic leadership, the practitioners can work together utilizing their collective strengths

efficiently. They can collaborate to make sure they are providing an inclusive environment for both children and families by understanding the diversity of sociological issues.

Section 2

This section is based on critically evaluating the Right Way: A Children's Human Rights Approach for Education in Wales" (2017), is a framework set by the Children Commissioner of Wales to protect the rights of children and young people in Wales. This document provides a framework to all educational settings including maintained and non-maintained nursery settings on how to protect and promote children's rights. The Welsh Government is the first country to recognize the rights of a child based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (No date). According to NSPCC (2023) the legislation to protect children's rights has been in place since 1800. However, certain cases of child abuse, child trafficking, children's death due to neglect and abuse have contributed to strengthening the safeguarding laws in the UK. The Child protection laws are regularly reviewed and updated to align with the Children's Act 1948, Children's Act 1975, 1997 criminal records check, Children Act 2004, Children Act 2006 and UNCRC. In 2004 the Welsh Government the UNCRC and developed the educational, social and child protection policies around it. Later in 2011 the legislation was passed on to protect the rights of a child and young people called 'Rights of Child and Young People (Wales) Measure (2011). This act describes the duty of a Welsh Ministers in relation to making policies based on right of a child and it should not be against the UNCRC.

According to the UK Parliament (2012) the United Nations describes the role of a children commissioner based on the principles of UNCRC that a Children Commissioner is independent and free from the influence of government, the officials and political parties to protect, promote and create awareness of the rights of children complaint with the standards set by United Nations Committee on the Rights of a Child. A children commissioner has strong links with the parliament and government and is accountable to the public, children and young people (UK Parliament, 2012). Similarly, Children Commissioner Wales (2023) states that the job of Children's Commissioner is to inform, educate, protect and implement children's rights and acts as an advocate overseeing the impacts of any decisions made by the government that effects the rights of a child. A children commissioner works to protect every child up to the age of 18, up to the age of 21 if the child is in care and until the age of 25 if the child was in care and still in education. A children Commissioner is supported by a team of people consisting of a young people advisory panel, commissioner's advisory panel and audit committee. Agreed by Towler (2013) Children's Commissioner for Wales is an independent institution first appointed in 2001 under the obligations of Care Standard Act 2000 and Children's Commissioner for Wales Act 2001, the role of children's commission is to safeguard children and work for their welfare (Towler, 2013). According to Children Commissioner for Wales (2023) the Commissioner does not only holds the power to exercise the proposed functions of government bodies that effect children but also reviewing and monitoring the complaint procedures, whistle blowing and safeguarding policies, examining special circumstances

and act as a children's representative in Welsh Government. Although, the commissioner holds a list of powers to protect the children's right but cannot interfere in the matter of welfare benefits, immigration, asylum, children in military and acting in the matters of Children and Court Advisory Service CAFCAS.

According to the Welsh Government (2022) Rocio Cifuentes has been appointed as a new Children's Commissioner for Wales. Cifuentes is the chief executive for ethnic minorities and youth support team also known as EYST, a major organization that supports ethnic minorities. Cifuentes arrived in UK with her parents at the age of one as a refugee from Chile. Cifuentes main interest lies in working with the youth from ethnic minorities, previously worked in the council for ethnic minorities, voluntary organization and homeless projects in Swansea. According to a summary of Right Way a Children's Rights Approach in Wales developed by Swansea Council (2021) for the Children's Commissioner for Wales based on five principles to protect and promote children's rights. The first principle is based on 'Embedding' that focuses on educating children and staff about children's rights and taking them into consideration when planning. The second principle is based on equality and non-discrimination that ensures equal rights for every child based on the principle of equity. The third principle consists of empowering children and young people to use their rights in involve in decision making process. The fourth principle is based on participation and listening to children's voice specially children from marginalized groups that includes ethnic minorities, children with additional needs, children in care etc. The fifth and last principle is based on the accountability of organization, that should be providing information easily accessible in a child friendly format understandable to children and taking feedback into consideration (Children Commissioner for Wales, 2021).

This document presents a cross-cutting theme for learning in the areas of humanities, relationship and sexuality, health and we-being. Furthermore, it forms the foundation of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act (2021) and according to it anyone involved in working with children should have a good knowledge and understanding of the two main children's human rights conventions which are UNCRC and UNCRPD also known as United Nation Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities. Both these are fundamental to Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Wales act 2018.

The Right way approach is a collective document that is relevant to all the legislation and guidance related to children in all educational settings. It is an effective way to incorporate the rights of a child into education from the start of an educational journey. This document shows clear an effective links between four areas of learning and children's rights, set out the responsibility to promote children's rights and have a distinctive guideline for children with additional learning needs promoting equality, diversity and inclusion. According to Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal Wales Act 2018 the children with disabilities have equal rights as to their peers without additional needs and should be catered for them. This legislation allows a child and young to have a voice in decision

making process. It allows practitioners to incorporate a practical approach in education that enables children to learn about their rights and responsibilities.

According to the Equality Act 2010 every human should be free from any of discrimination based on age, gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation etc. Similarly, according to UNCRC Article 2 and 8 a child should be free from all forms of discrimination based on religion, culture, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status and a child's identity should be protected, preserved and celebrated free to form relationship, celebrate their culture and language. Similarly, Maslow's theory called 'Hierarchy of Needs' also emphasize on the importance of fulfilling the child's psychological needs including the needs of love and belonging that allows needs a child to reach the stage of Self Actualization or commonly known as Self Esteem. Furthermore, this document also emphasizes the safety of children including protecting them from any form of harm like social, emotional, physical and sexual abuse and neglect, including at home and educational settings. According to Welsh Government (2019) Anti-bullying Guidance parents and carers bullying is a repeated, intentionally unacceptable form of behaviour that could physically or emotionally harm a child. It has a drastic effect on the mental health and well-being of a child and could result in a life threatening situation. There are many forms of bullying which include exclusion, isolation, teasing, making fun or online bullying. Online bullying is a serious issue in the digital age result is exposure to inappropriate sexual content, being a target of human trafficking, black mailing. Prejudice bullying is a type of bullying based on individual differences such as race, gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability. Bullying makes a child feel depressed, alone, unsafe and powerless. According to Welsh Government (2019) guidance 'Challenging Bullying' states that schools have a legal duty to protect all learners and provide them with a safe and nurturing environment. The Education Act 2002, Education and Inspection Act 2006 and Equality Act 2010 require a headteacher to safeguard children from all forms of harm, encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying. Furthermore, according to Child Poverty Strategy: 2022 progress report; tackling inequality and child poverty are one of the major aims for Welsh Government, significant policies and investment are being made in the area to improve the child poverty rate. However, Covid has a huge impact on child poverty, with the highest rate of inflation in last 40 year, housing crisis and cost of living crisis impacting every family in Wales but effecting the most disadvantage groups. In line with the UNCRC (No Date) and Rights Way Approach (2022) the Welsh Government is working actively in partnership with other organization to tackle the issues surrounding poverty.

In conclusion, UNCRC forms the basis of all the child protection, safeguarding, health and well-being policies and legislation related to children in Wales. Furthermore, there has been clear evidence of significant improvements in children's rights after Wales joined the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child in 2004. Secondly, the presence of the Children Commissioner for Wales has a huge impact on child welfare addressing issues such as child abuse, poverty, equality and young people from marginalized groups. However, after Covid, the high inflation rate, and cost of living crisis there is significant

room for improvement and more could be done for children living in challenging circumstances.

Section 3

This section of the assignment is based on identifying and critically evaluating the sociological factors that effects the early years education of a child's life with a clear emphasis on child poverty and the range of support services available to facilitate children. According to Frontiers (2023) the environmental factors that the normal functioning of the brain including the quality of life are called sociological factors. Similarly, the factors that are proportional to income and can be easily assessed quantitatively are called socio-economic factors. According to UNCRC Article 26 and Article 27 every child should have access to an adequate standard of living and a state should provide social security, education and financial support in times of need (UNCRC, No date). According to Children in Wales (2023) around 34% of Children in Wales are suffering from poverty and it has a detrimental effect on their health and well-being. Poverty does not affect their present but the future prospect of their life including educational and employment opportunities (Children in Wales, 2023). According to Child Poverty Action Group (No date) between 2021- 2022 around 2.9 miliion children were living in poverty which makes around nine children in every classroom. These children are mostly living in lone parent families, from ethnic minorities, larger families, disabled person in the family. Similarly, according to Welsh Government (2021) it is the duty of state to tackle the socio-economic deprivation effects the social, emotional and mental health, confidence, self-esteem of children directly effecting the educational outcomes resulting in fewer employment opportunities for future, housing crisis and inadequate living conditions. Furthermore, Covid –19 pandemic has an impact on all areas of life with an expectation of increased inequalities in society (Welsh Government, 2021). According to Welsh Government (2023) the government is working in partnership to tackle poverty to support families and children and it aims to tackle wider inequalities by 2035 and committed to reach the target by the end of 2050. A study conducted by Hanson et al. (2013) suggests that poverty has a negative impact on brain development of a child and children from low socio-economic background show a slower rate of brain development than children with an affluent background, directly linked with behavioural issues in early childhood. According to Welsh Government guidance on getting help from flying start and Flying Start Cardiff (No date) Flying Start is a Welsh Government initiative to support families and children under the age of four from disadvantage communities by providing part-time, childcare, enhanced health visiting service, parenting programme, speech and language support services. Free school meals are another initiative by the Welsh Government (2023) to tackle child poverty by providing free meals to the children from eligible families already getting welfare support.

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