

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP: WORKING TOGETHER TO SUPPORT FAMILIES

According to Ferdman, Prime, and Riggio (2020), inclusion is a dynamic process where people, groups, organisations, and communities embrace variety as a valuable asset rather than aiming for uniformity. Given this, inclusive leadership refers to the leadership style that promotes and facilitates inclusion. Correspondingly, it encompasses the attitudes, behaviours, and methods of influencing individuals and the systems within their work and living environments. The goal is to enhance understanding and support for inclusion, encourage continuous efforts to foster inclusion, integrate inclusive values and processes into work practises, and ensure the long-term sustainability of inclusion.

Moreover, according to Childhood Education International (2021), typically, inclusive education has concentrated on special education to ensure that students with disabilities get the assistance they need to learn and thrive while being included in regular classroom settings. However, in recent years, inclusive education has broadened to address all forms of exclusion and marginalisation, disparities, and inequalities in access, participation, and learning outcomes. Notably, restrictive reactions to variety in race, socioeconomic class, ethnic background, geographic location, residence status, religion, gender, and ability are examples of social exclusion and marginalisation that directly impact participation and learning outcomes, according to Santiago and Cerna (2020). However, inclusion is currently recognised as a social justice-oriented approach to education that seeks to safeguard every child's fundamental human right to an individually, socially, and developmentally suitable education (Santiago and Cerna, 2020). Moreover, according to the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2020), inclusive school leadership focuses on actively tackling inequalities to foster a sense of community and ensure the full involvement of all learners.

In the following scenario, Paula is a single mother of Romanian origin who moved from Romania to England to be with her concubine. Although he insisted that she come to the UK and live together, he seems disturbed by her presence, irritated, and even verbally violent, even around Laura, her 4-year-old daughter. As the arguments and insults worsen, Paula decides to

move in only with her daughter, even though she does not speak English and her only help is a friend.

Since Paula's work schedule is from 9 to 3, she arrives at school half an hour later to pick up Laura. Also, for this reason, and because it is difficult for her to speak English, Paula does not come to the meeting with the parents and does not participate in nursery activities. Sometimes, when the traffic is congested, Paula calls on her friend to pick up Laura from school or to help her with translation when needed.

Although Laura was a sociable and happy child in Romania, she now seems sad and withdrawn. In the morning, she cries a lot and has difficulty getting out of her mother's arms.

Children:

According to the European Agency (2015), inclusive school leaders believe that all students, regardless of age, race, sex, or nationality, should receive a worthwhile, high-quality education with their friends and classmates in their community. Moreover, Open Society Foundations (2019) claims that the responsibility of the inclusive leader becomes vital in establishing an environment where young children of diverse nationalities coexist and flourish.

Furthermore, according to Bowlby (1969), separation from the mother is an emotional journey for children. Consequently, an inclusive leader must establish an atmosphere that reflects warmth and allows children like Laura to develop a feeling of belonging. Furthermore, children can use transitional items like teddy bears, blankets, and toys to promote a symbolic image of the mother. As a result, according to Palaiologou (2016), the warmth that the transitional items provide helps children feel safe.

Furthermore, the ability of an inclusive leader to recognise and appreciate cultural transitions is crucial, according to Bourke and Titu (2020). However, an in-depth reflection shows any possible gaps in understanding Laura's particular difficulties in adapting to an unfamiliar environment. Given this, according to Gotsis and Grmani (2016), an inclusive leader's primary role is to provide emotional support, empathy, and build a sense of belonging. Particularly, Laura's initially cheerful and joyful attitude in Romania is a reference point for assessing her current emotional state. In the current situation of Laura, who seems unhappy and distant, the leader must utilise culturally sensitive and English proficiency-aware techniques, according to Rapa and Farago (2020). Therefore, the leader's efforts to comfort

Laura may be a good component. However, the critical appraisal emphasises the need for better awareness of relevant cultural factors leading to her emotional state.

Additionally, Igoa (2013) claims that an inclusive leader must acknowledge and appreciate the cultural transformation and the difficulties of transitioning to an unfamiliar environment. To build a feeling of belonging for students like Laura, inclusive leaders must ensure that classroom practises correspond with awareness and respect for different cultures, according to Glass, Wongtrirat, and Buus (2015). In view of this, a critical examination could indicate potential areas where the leader might improve the classroom environment by introducing aspects of Romanian culture. For instance, Jackson, J. (2019) claims that it might involve celebrating cultural festivals, introducing varied literature, or adopting familiar activities that are meaningful to Laura.

Moreover, effective communication is at the core of inclusive leadership, according to Jain (2018). Therefore, inclusive leaders should use various communication methods, such as explicit language, pictures, and gestures, to cross possible language barriers. However, Theoharis and Scanlan (2020) suggest difficulties could occur because linguistic nuances and varied communication styles need constant adaptation. As a result, to guarantee successful communication for all students, inclusive leaders must remain mindful and search for new strategies, such as using translation services or involving multilingual personnel.

Families:

According to Ferdman, Prime, and Riggio (2020), people who are noticeably different from the traditionally represented categories may not feel as secure, welcomed, or valued without the feeling of inclusion and may, therefore, be less inclined to interact, engage, and contribute fully. Moreover, if their sense of identity is compromised or they feel unsafe being themselves, their abilities and total contribution may be reduced or lost. This is also the case of Paula and her daughter, Laura. However, people may be completely themselves in inclusive workplaces, trying to be their most effective without fear of hiding or becoming someone else, according to Ferdman, Prime, and Riggio (2020).

In view of this, Randel *et al.* (2018) claim that inclusive leadership involves fostering a culture of empathy and understanding among teachers, instructors, and other parents. Moreover, the leader should foster a compassionate environment in which people are aware of

the numerous barriers families like Paula's encounter. This cultural change helps to create a more welcoming and supportive educational environment. Similarly, Lindsey et al. (2018) suggest that inclusive leaders should conduct cultural sensitivity training for school staffers to improve their knowledge of varied backgrounds. Moreover, this training should emphasise the importance of cultural inclusion while providing practical skills for successful communication in multilingual settings. Furthermore, the leader may contribute to a more inclusive environment by encouraging cultural awareness among staff. Considering Paula's work time restrictions, an inclusive leader could seek and implement flexible engagement solutions. This might include scheduling meetings multiple times or offering virtual participation choices, according to LaRocque, Kleiman, and Darling (2011). Moreover, Gadsden, Ford, and Breiner (2016) highlight that embracing technology might bridge the gap for parents with time constraints, assuring their engagement in their child's educational development.

Moreover, encouragement of sharing family pictures may benefit families who speak English as an additional language; it is essential to provide them with the chance to communicate about their home environment, significant events, and celebrations. Also, waiting spaces and hallways are regularly visited by parents. If there are children who speak English as a second language, an inclusive leader should display information in both English and the children's native language, according to Palaiologou (2016).

Also, Paula's weak English proficiency continues to be a significant obstacle to her full participation in the school community. In view of this, implementing language support mechanisms, like translation services or language help programmes, should be encouraged by inclusive leaders to improve communication. Moreover, by taking such preventative measures, language barriers may be reduced, and inclusiveness can be increased, according to Gómez-Hurtado *et al.* (2021).

Moreover, Gotsis and Grimani (2016) claim that inclusive leadership expands beyond academic concerns to embrace the overall well-being of families. Given this, the leader should engage in collaboration with support services or counseling resources to effectively handle the home difficulties Paula is experiencing. Moreover, providing a support network for families facing challenges cultivates a feeling of community and contributes to developing a more caring atmosphere for parents and children, according to Pala (2011). Furthermore, by taking proactive steps and demonstrating a dedication to comprehending the complex dynamics of

diverse families, inclusive leaders can create an environment in which education is more supportive and inclusive for all, according to Shields (2017).

Professionals

In today's varied and interconnected society, leaders must embrace inclusive practises to create cooperation and support individuals from all backgrounds, according to LaRocque, Kleiman, and Darling (2011). Moreover, understanding the context is the first step for an inclusive leader to comprehend Paula's and her daughter's circumstances. That involves recognising the difficulties of relocating to a new country, adjusting to a new culture, and overcoming a language barrier. Given this, an empathetic and culturally aware leader recognises the necessity of addressing these issues to support a smooth transition, according to Shields (2017).

Given this, Gadsden, Ford, and Breiner (2016) maintain that an inclusive leader should build a supportive team of professionals aware of cultural diversity and have the necessary skills to successfully support people like Paula and her daughter. Moreover, language instructors, cultural mediators, social workers, and other experts who can offer complete assistance may be part of this team. Furthermore, collaboration among team members is essential to ensuring a comprehensive strategy covering Paula and her daughter's language, cultural, and social requirements. Moreover, creating an atmosphere in which Paula and Laura feel encouraged, appreciated, and included is something that leaders can do by addressing difficulties and grabbing opportunities, according to Gadsden, Ford, and Breiner (2016).

Also, Paula's move to England exposed her to linguistic obstacles, limiting her ability to interact successfully with professionals at Laura's school. Moreover, the language difficulty and lack of social support add to her social isolation within the school community. However, an inclusive leader understands the significance of language in Paula's integration process and provides specialised language assistance that considers Paula's requirements by working with language professionals. Moreover, language lessons, linguistic exchange programs, and translation services may all be used to enhance successful communication, according to Gadsden, Ford, and Breiner (2016).

South (2015) also claims that moving to another country may be emotionally demanding. In view of this, an inclusive leader may collaborate with professionals in the mental health field, such as psychologists or therapists, to provide emotional support and contribute to the well-being of the single mother and her daughter. Again, a significant obstacle is presented

by Paula's tense relationship with her concubine, characterised by verbal aggression and irritability. The prevalence of domestic violence not only affects Paula, but it also affects the emotional well-being of Paula's daughter, Laura. Given this, Westwood (2018) claims that an inclusive leader should be able to identify the warning signs of domestic abuse and work together with other professionals, such as counsellors and social workers, to provide prompt help. That might include connecting them with local support services and assuring their safety and well-being.

Overall, Merrick (2021) sustains that empowering people with the opportunity to reach their full potential is an essential component of inclusive leadership. In addition to fostering personal development, this empowerment enhances people's ability to contribute to the community in which they live. Correspondingly, the achievement of inclusive leadership significantly impacts Paula and Laura's well-being through collaboration with professionals.

Community

According to South (2015), a community is a dynamic network of people who share common interests, beliefs, responsibilities, and obligations.

Moreover, the ecological systems theory developed by Bronfenbrenner emphasises the multiplicity of factors that might affect an individual's growth, according to Elliot and Davis (2020). Within the context of Paula and Laura, the school, Paula's place of employment, her friend, and the surrounding environment are all essential elements that constitute their micro- and mesosystems that have the potential to contribute to their overall well-being. Given this, the ability to traverse these systems is required for inclusive leaders to understand and address Paula and her daughter's difficulties.

Additionally, Randel *et al.* (2018) claim that an inclusive leadership style within a community acknowledges and responds to its members' various requirements, ensuring that no one is excluded or disadvantaged. Moreover, Santiago and Cerna (2020) sustain that inclusive leaders play an essential role in promoting awareness of other cultures in the community. Given this, organising cultural sensitivity programmes and events may help people understand and respect the varied origins of newcomers. Additionally, Whriki's emphasis on incorporating various perspectives into the communal structure might inspire inclusive leaders in Wales, where cultural diversity is growing, according to the Welsh Government (2016).

Correspondingly, the community may create a welcoming and supportive atmosphere for the single mother and her child by appreciating and respecting cultural diversity.

Also, language limitations are often among the most significant limitations for people from different countries. In Wales, inclusive leaders might collaborate with the community to develop language assistance programmes, language lessons, or chat groups, according to Education and Public Services Group (2016). In comparison, the Ministry of Education (2017) argues that Whriki's community approach in New Zealand heavily emphasizes language development and communication skills. Using Whriki's concept, Wales may establish a language-inclusive environment that helps integrate the single mother and her child into the community. Moreover, considering the difficulties that single parents confront, inclusive leaders may fight for flexible work rules that allow Paula to manage her career and parenting duties successfully. Furthermore, scheduling community events at non-traditional hours allows the single mother to engage in community activities despite her job schedule, according to Working Families (2018). Furthermore, Wall, Litjens, and Taguma (2015) claim that Whriki's community approach recognises the importance of family and community interaction, giving Wales a helpful foundation to build projects that respond to the unique needs of individuals in different life situations. Moreover, in order to ensure that the child gets sufficient assistance during the transition, inclusive leaders in Wales have to work with educational institutions. Establishing a school climate that is welcoming and inclusive, providing language support, and implementing cultural education programmes are all necessary steps in this process, according to Westwood (2018).

In conclusion, the inclusive leader's involvement in Paula's scenario plays a vital role in creating an environment that encourages diversity, addresses family difficulties, and promotes children's holistic development. Moreover, the leader may contribute to a more inclusive and inviting educational environment by recognising and overcoming cultural, language, and domestic impediments. Furthermore, opportunities for innovative leadership involve flexible participation, cultural sensitivity training, and social and emotional support. Additionally, inclusive leaders could open the path for a more inclusive and supportive educational experience for everyone by making proactive efforts and committing to understanding the complex dynamics of varied families and working with professionals and communities to support them.

PART II:

According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2019), a policy is a collection of ideas or a plan of action for particular circumstances that a group of people, a commercial organisation, an authority, or a political party have publicly accepted.

Moreover, according to the Welsh Government (2016), early years provision in Wales is guided by comprehensive policies and expert guidance to promote inclusive leadership. The Foundation Phase is one such policy that is critical to building inclusion. Furthermore, the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 establishes a more extensive legal framework that impacts the country's early childhood programming. This assessment will critically analyse these policies and their impact on enabling inclusive leadership in early childhood services in Wales.

Foundation Phase:

According to the Department for Education and Skills (2015), in Wales, the Foundation Phase is a specific educational framework for children ages three to seven. It emphasises experiential and play-based learning, recognising the significance of holistic development in children. The Foundation Phase principles strive to build an inclusive learning environment by appreciating each child's unique qualities and encouraging a feeling of belonging.

Children's Commissioner for Wales (2020) claims that the Foundation Phase policy's phrasing indicates a commitment to inclusion. Moreover, it addresses the need to adapt teaching methods "to respond to the diverse needs of children." However, this open-ended language may pose difficulties in implementation. The meaning of "diverse needs" is wide and open to interpretation, which might result in contradictions in practise.

In the same way, differences in teacher understanding and training constitute some of the barriers to implementing the Foundation Phase policy, according to Welsh Government Social Research (2015). In view of this, teachers need adequate support and professional development to integrate play-based learning properly and adjust it to children's various needs. Also, Schuelka (2018) claims that limited human and material resources may impede the establishment of a fully inclusive environment. Some settings, for example, might not have the necessary personnel numbers or specialised assistance to meet the different needs of all children.

Furthermore, the term "as far as reasonably possible" appears in the policy, implying an amount of flexibility in its implementation. However, while flexibility is necessary for adapting to changing circumstances, it also brings uncertainty. What practitioners consider "reasonably possible" may vary, possibly leading to divergent approaches to inclusion, according to the Welsh Government (2020).

Moreover, Lifting Limits (2022) claims that despite its good intentions, the Foundation Phase may unintentionally contribute to gender stereotypes. Given this, the focus on outside play and exploration may be more aligned with conventional ideals of masculinity, therefore impacting girls' enthusiasm. As a result, although the policy encourages diversity, careful consideration of gender norms is required for fully inclusive early childhood programming.

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014:

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 provides a comprehensive legal framework that includes health and social care and education. While it does not mainly concentrate on early childhood services, its principles and provisions have consequences for the well-being of children and families, impacting the inclusiveness of early childhood institutions, according to the Welsh Government (2015).

Moreover, the Welsh Government (2018) claims that the Act emphasises the significance of meeting the different needs of people, supporting their dignity, and safeguarding their rights. Additionally, these concepts align with the aims of inclusive leadership in early childhood education. Furthermore, the Act promotes collaborative working by mandating municipal governments and their partners to collaborate to enhance the well-being of individuals, particularly children (Welsh Government, 2018).

However, the Act's broad application might make translating its principles into particular activities within the early years provision difficult. Also, the concept of "well-being" is multidimensional and requires careful examination to establish how it applies to young children. This breadth may lead to differences in interpretation and implementation among various early childhood settings, according to Lewis (2016).

Furthermore, Murphy and Waters-Davies (2022) claim that the Act emphasises the need for preventive and early intervention. While this is a beneficial development, difficulties may

emerge in identifying and addressing early signals of specific needs in young children. Given this, Bradshaw (2016) states that it is essential to have trained practitioners and adequate resources to make an early diagnosis, and the availability of these aspects might differ from setting to setting.

However, possible breakdowns in coordination and communication between the many agencies concerned with the welfare of children may limit the Act's broad implementation, according to Roberts *et al.* (2016). Therefore, Davies (2019) remarks that effective teamwork is vital for comprehensive assistance, but there may be difficulties since social workers, educators, and medical experts have different professional cultures, languages, and customs.

The Act also highlights the need to include people in decisions about their care and assistance. Although this is important for older individuals, Jackson (2018) notes that applying this idea to young children requires considering their developing abilities and the decision-making role of parents and other carers; however, balancing engaging children and respecting parents' rights and obligations might be challenging.

In conclusion, the Foundation Phase and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 are essential in developing early childhood services in Wales. At the same time, both policies indicate a commitment to diversity; however, their comprehensive and flexible formulation may result in different interpretations and implementations. Additionally, Westwood (2018) claims that challenges in teacher comprehension, resource restrictions, possible reinforcement of gender stereotypes, and the necessity for successful cooperation across sectors are all barriers to inclusiveness. Therefore, Rodd (2020) highlights that continuous professional development, clear rules, and collaborative efforts are required to improve inclusive leadership in early childhood services. Given this, to overcome these problems, policymakers and practitioners must collaborate to ensure that the ideals of inclusion are incorporated into effective and consistent practises for the benefit of all children in Wales, according to Nutbrown, Clough, and Atherton (2013).

PART III:

According to Better Kid Care (2022), leadership is vital to building an inclusive and welcoming environment in Early Years education. Moreover, it is a commitment to establishing environments where every child feels a sense of belonging despite their background, ability, or identity. Considering that children are currently traversing the delicate but essential path of early childhood development, the following are some ideas about promoting inclusive leadership.

1. Creating an Attitude of Acceptance in the Culture:

Leading Effectively Staff (2023) claims that developing a culture of acceptance is the first step towards achieving inclusive leadership. In order to do this, Kaiser and Rasminsky (2019) argue that it is necessary to acknowledge and appreciate the various experiences, talents, and backgrounds that each child contributes to the respective environment. Additionally, the acceptance of diversity, the promotion of open communication, and the demonstration of inclusive behaviour are all necessary roles that teachers and administrators play in cultivating this sense of community. Moreover, CIRCLE (2015) sustains that leaders convey a strong message of acceptance by incorporating inclusive practices into their day-to-day routines, and some examples of these practises include the use of various reading materials and inclusive language.

2. Educator Professional Development:

Providing educators with the information and skills they need to meet different requirements is essential for inclusive leadership, according to Childhood Education International (2021). Moreover, teachers may be empowered to create adaptable learning environments through continuous professional development programs concentrating on diversity, equality, and inclusion. Furthermore, Douglas (2019) claims that workshops offering insights into recognising and correcting hidden biases, understanding various learning styles, and using inclusive teaching practises may substantially influence the overall dynamics of the classroom.

3. Collaboration with Families and the Community:

According to Molina Roldán *et al.* (2021), inclusivity goes beyond the classroom walls. Given this, collaboration with families and the larger community is essential for a comprehensive approach. Moreover, maintaining open lines of communication with parents and carers develops a feeling of cooperation, allowing educators to obtain insights into each child's particular requirements and cultural background. Furthermore, Merrick (2021) maintains that including the community in school activities, cultural festivals, and educational programmes strengthens the child's feeling of belonging and underlines the value of variety in the Early Years environment.

4. Curriculum and Learning Material Adaptation:

An inclusive curriculum reflects the varied society in which students live, according to Little (2022). Given this, Learning Journals (2021) supports the idea that educators may assist students in comprehending the world surrounding them by adding varied viewpoints, tales, and stories about history into the curriculum. Moreover, adapting learning materials to different ways of learning also guarantees that every child can actively participate and interact with the educational content (Learning Journals, 2021).

5. Proactive Intervention and Assistance:

According to the Mississippi Department of Education (2023), inclusive leadership implies proactive involvement to identify and overcome learning impediments. Moreover, regular evaluations of individual development and a commitment to offering additional support as required contribute to facilitating the development of an inclusive learning environment. Furthermore, collaboration with special education professionals, differentiating teaching, or developing personalised learning plans customised to each child's strengths and difficulties may be required.

In conclusion, inclusive leadership in the Early Years requires a solid commitment to recognising and valuing differences at all stages. Additionally, inclusive leaders can create an Early Years setting where every child feels valued, included, and empowered to achieve their full potential by cultivating an accepting culture, investing in continuing education, encouraging collaboration with families and the community, adapting the curriculum, and offering proactive support. Overall, these deliberate efforts can impact the future of individual children and help establish a more inclusive society.

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