

Section 1

According to Booysen (2014) an inclusive leader is a respectful individual that enables individuals to be included whilst still promoting their authenticity and uniqueness. Ferdman (2021) develops this stating the leader will ensure everyone can participate through safe, engaging, appreciated and fair ways considering diversity, inclusion and equality. Pate and Stutz (2024) believe that inclusive leadership leads a diverse workforce to grow and build whilst building a culture of belonging. Weiss *et al.* (2021) highlights the leader will influence and impact the employees attitudes too. Furthermore Bortino *et al.* (2016) states inclusive leadership appreciates and celebrates diversity including everyone in all aspects of their early years experience such as decision making. Inclusive leadership ensures that any barriers are broken down from excluding individuals from society. This is done through focusing on individualised needs and aspirations to reduce the risk of exclusion and empower the individuals to fully participate in society (Bortino *et al.* 2024). Inclusive leaders should reflect to identify effective strategies and highlight potential barriers.

Scenario

A parent, Mrs Okeke, has come to see me to discuss her daughter Amari. She is 4 years old and has just started reception class. She has lived in Swansea since birth however her family originated from Africa. Mrs Okeke explained how Amari has been coming home upset due to her classmates frequently mispronouncing her name. She has become anxious about attending school since this and does not feel like she is part of the class. In addition to this Mrs Okeke raised her concern that Amari will not know enough about African culture as there is not any in the classroom. She expands on this stating that she believes Amari would feel more comfortable seeing her own culture reflected into the environment like it is at home. It has been agreed for Amari's mum to come back in for a meeting in a month to discuss how they are feeling. She has also been invited to bring in any african items to add to the classroom and is welcome to visit at any time.

Mitchell (2016) states mispronouncing a name is very common in a classroom. Dali *et al.* (2022) reveals mispronouncing individuals' names can undermine the

individual's identity. Kohli and Solórzano (2012) incorrect pronunciation is a form of racism. Kohli and Solorzano (2012) and Dali *et al.* (2022) indicate that this is microaggressive racism. Bonnett and Sok (2022) and Schlote (2018) state that an individual's name can tie to their family, culture, and sense of identity. Dechief (2015) and Schlote (2018) states that individuals often accept mispronunciation of their names for an easier life or will even change their name.

Schlote (2018) states that mispronunciations can be deemed as disrespectful. This can result in individuals not feeling a sense of belonging and minimise their background and culture. As an inclusive leader this should be targeted and overcome. Ensuring children pronounce their African friend's name correctly is essential for fostering respect, inclusion, and cultural awareness. Mitchell (2016) furthers this revealing there can be a negative effect on their academic development. Kohli and Solórzano (2012) imply that incorrectly pronouncing an individual's name has a long lasting impact on their self perception and world views for the child. Their name is the identity and they have the right to be respected with their name correctly. Teachers are a lead role in racial microaggression as they should set the tone pronouncing the childrens names correctly. They should ensure children who mispronounce are corrected instantly.

Ladson-Billings (1995) discusses the importance of integrating cultural awareness in education, which can include proper name pronunciation. This can be done through breaking individuals' names down. As an inclusive leader the teacher could carry this out during registration. Going round the class so each child pronounces their name and the class copy so that Amari does not feel singled out. Gay (2002) supports this strategy emphasising the need for culturally responsive teaching practices which will help with learning and correctly pronouncing students' names. Consistency reinforcing the children to repeat each of them on the register is likely to reduce the risk of mispronunciation. Similarly Kohli and Solozano (2012) state that using these strategies to ensure children's names are pronounced correctly will benefit the child as they will feel respect for their identities and foster a sense of belonging. This should help the children pronounce Amari's name correctly and therefore result in her feeling a sense of belonging in the class.

Cultural appropriation takes in a variety of forms and has many consequences.

(Arya, 2021) Han (2019) states that culture appropriation represents cultures and is critical to make individuals feel represented however culture appreciation is all about the culture more in depth sharing, understanding and celebrating it. According to Preemptivelove (2021) cultural appreciation is when individuals seek to learn about or explore a different culture simply to honour the culture and its people.

Children have the right to have a voice and to be included in decisions made about them (Unicef, no date). Considering this Amari's feelings must be heard. As an inclusive leader the following strategies will be put in place to meet the needs of Amari and her family. There will be a well-being wall check in every day to track if these are benefiting Amari or not. In addition to this the teacher will regularly check in with her and her family as well as continuing to observe her.

Ladson-billings (2009) suggests that inclusive leaders must ensure that the curriculum reflects diverse cultures, histories, and perspectives. In this scenario african culture should be incorporated into the curriculum using a range of african learning materials. An example of this could be reading 'Handa's Surprise'. Banks (2015) emphasises the importance of a multicultural curriculum that includes the contributions of different cultural groups. Leaders should provide resources that highlight these contributions and ensure that such materials are accessible to all students. Banks (2015) reveals that incorporating culturally diverse materials into the curriculum will help the children feel neglected into the environment. Cultural representation in the classroom is crucial for promoting equity and inclusivity. Children who see their culture reflected in their learning environment develop a stronger sense of identity and self-worth (Gay, 2018). Creating a safe and welcoming environment is crucial for student inclusion. According to Evans and Vaandering (2016) inclusive leaders ensure that the physical and emotional safety of students is prioritised. Derman-Sparks and Edwards (2010) states it is significant for the environment to reflect cultural diversity. Children could bring items in from home to decorate the classroom or teachers should ensure there are diverse display walls. Integrating materials that represent various ethnicities, languages, and experiences is crucial. Welsh Government (2022) a curriculum for funded non maintained nursery settings states that they use open-ended resources that are not gender-specific and to reflect diversity. This creates learning opportunities for the

child to create whilst respecting the cultures in the class.

Ensuring important dates for each individual are celebrated in the class through speaking to the parents and finding out what important celebrations they celebrate as a family and culture (Banks, 2015). Families could introduce basic phrases into the class to develop the children's cultural knowledge as well as make the child feel more included (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012). Epstein (2018) states that inviting parents or the community in to share experiences and stories is a significant way to learn about different cultures. Involving parents and the local community in the educational process can provide an authentic and diverse setting. Inclusive leaders engage parents and community members in school activities and decision-making processes. This engagement can provide valuable cultural insights and foster a sense of belonging among students (Epstein, 2018). Furthermore Epstein (2018) expands on this stating engaging families in the educational process is essential for promoting inclusivity. In the scenario, the inclusive leader actively will involve parents in school activities and decision-making processes. This communication between teachers and parents can provide valuable cultural insights and foster a sense of belonging among students. By inviting parents to share their traditions and experiences, the leader helps bridge the gap between home and school, creating a more inclusive environment. However, barriers may include language differences, cultural misunderstandings, and varying levels of parental involvement. Inclusive leaders must be proactive in addressing these challenges by providing translation services, creating culturally responsive communication strategies, and offering flexible engagement opportunities. Bowlby (1969) states that good collaboration between families and inclusive leaders will create consistency for the child as they can share information from home and the school back and forth. The inclusive leader planning to meet with Mrs Obeke again and including her in the adaptations will create a positive relationship that will support Bronfenbrenner's theory (1979) that including parents in the child's learning will enhance the child's holistic development.

Additionally inclusive leaders must work closely with teachers and other school staff to promote a supportive and inclusive environment. Gay (2018) reveals providing professional development opportunities focused on cultural competence, inclusive teaching practices, and anti-bias education is crucial. In the scenario, the inclusive

leader should organise workshops and training sessions to teach the teachers and develop their skills to support diverse learners. An inclusive leader values diversity and promotes inclusivity. This involves setting clear expectations for respectful and inclusive behaviour among staff and students. Leaders can organise professional development workshops focused on cultural competence, anti-bias education, and inclusive teaching practices (Gay, 2018). This should result in teachers developing skills and knowledge to support diverse learners effectively. Paris and Alim (2017) state that teachers should avoid cultural appropriation and ensure that cultural elements are presented authentically and accurately. It is important for professional development that teachers know the background of their children and look into their culture properly to implement cultural appreciation. Villegas and Lucas (2002) state inclusive leaders provide opportunities for teachers to learn about inclusive teaching strategies, cultural competence, and bias reduction. By supporting continuous learning, leaders ensure that educators are equipped to meet the diverse needs of their students. Inclusive leaders should reflect and evaluate the effectiveness of their inclusion efforts. Ainscow (2020) suggests this should also be evaluated by parents, families, other educators and the community as well as the child. By analysing this data, leaders can identify areas for improvement and make informed decisions to enhance inclusivity. This will reduce the barrier of lack of understanding and reduce exclusion and discrimination at the setting.

According to Neito (2010) policies that promote equity and inclusivity are essential for supporting all students. This includes anti-bullying policies that specifically address discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and other characteristics Tomlinson (2014) develops stating that inclusive leaders should advocate for policies that support diverse learning needs. An important debate in inclusion is equity and equality. Although it is significant for children to have equal rights some children might need extra support to achieve this. Equity will support meeting the individual needs.

In the scenario Amari is anxious about attending school. According to Ephgrave (2020) when a child is distracted such as being anxious, they are not engaged in their learning therefore are unable to progress information preventing their brain forming new synapses. It is significant that children feel secure in order to develop.

Therefore if a child is not engaged for a long period of time this will need to be monitored as this can prevent them from forming empathy or new relationships in the future. This could be supported using Bowlby's theory of attachment as a strategy. Bowlby's theory of attachment states that children need to create meaningful relationships with their carers in order to feel comfortable and confident in their environment allowing them to play and learn about the world (Bowlby, 1969). If Amari creates a positive relationship with the educators and friends she will feel a sense of belonging at the setting and safe. This will support her emotional well-being as well as develop her academic skills.

Incorporating African culture into early childhood classrooms is a vital step towards creating an inclusive and equitable educational environment. By including African cultural elements into the curriculum, celebrating cultural events, respecting names, involving parents and the community, and enhancing the classroom environment, educators can foster a sense of belonging and appreciation for diversity among all students. In addition to supporting Amari this will also create educational experiences for the rest of the class. By working with children, families, professionals, and communities, inclusive leaders can create a supportive and inclusive educational environment. However, they must be aware of the various opportunities and barriers.

Section 2

According to Baldock, Fitzgerald and Kay (2013) a policy is a stated intention that requires individuals with the responsibilities to take action. Dallymore (2019) furthers this stating a policy is determined considering education, roles of families and societies view of childhood.

In Wales, a curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings plays a crucial role in early childhood education. The curriculum aims to provide a framework for early years education, emphasising inclusive leadership (Welsh Government, 2022). Inclusive leadership in early years settings is critical as it fosters an environment where all children, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities, receive equitable educational opportunities.

Welsh Government (2022) states that it is a child centred curriculum. According to Broadhead, Howard, and Wood (2010) child centred approach supports children with diverse learning needs, including those with additional learning needs (ALN). According to Ephgrave (2018), Ephgrave (2020) and Welsh Government (2022) the children are assessed through learning journeys. Each individual child will have a record specific to them rather than the typical one that fits all approaches. Furthermore Ephgrave (2020) and Welsh Government (2022) state that using these inclusive records celebrate the children's individuality and set development targets that are suitable for their needs.

The Welsh Government (2022) a curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings has a strong emphasis on personal and social development, well-being, and cultural diversity aligns with the principles of inclusive leadership. It encourages the development of social skills, emotional intelligence, and cultural awareness, which are critical for fostering an inclusive environment (Nutbrown, 2011). The curriculum suggests activities designed to promote respect, empathy, and understanding among children can help build a supportive and inclusive classroom culture (Welsh government, 2022). According to the Welsh Government (2022) the curriculum promotes both children and practitioners to have a sense of belonging and pride, celebrating the diverse culture of modern Wales and helping children develop a sense of cynefin celebrating Wales and the world around them. The curriculum states that the environment will have diverse and aesthetic representation. The open ended resources offered are diverse and are not gender-specific. Additionally to ensure the setting is organised and accessible for all. However Welsh Government (2022) are not specific and clear with their expectations throughout. It states to make "appropriate" adaptations to remove barriers however different individuals can interpret that differently. This will create inconsistent settings.

The curriculum supports the rights of a child creating a safe environment (Welsh Government, 2022 and UNICEF, no date). Through implementation of inclusive practice within teaching methods children will all feel a strong sense of belonging, feeling that they are valued and represented in the setting, and have an equal opportunity to thrive.

The inclusion of cultural diversity as a core element of the curriculum is a significant strength (Welsh Government, 2022). According to Banks (2015) the inclusion of cultural diversity as a core element of the curriculum is a significant strength. By introducing children to a variety of cultural traditions, languages, and perspectives, the curriculum promotes inclusivity and helps children develop a broader understanding of the world. Connolly *et al.* (2019) advocates for differentiated instruction and culturally responsive teaching methods that respect and celebrate diversity within the nursery settings which is covered in the curriculum.

The curriculum states to build trusting relationships between the home and setting whilst ensuring learning and development are taking place. This should nurture children's well-being and sense of belonging. Bowlby (1969) attachment theory states that children need to form secure and trusting relationships with carers. This could be essential between children and practitioners especially if they may have experienced trauma. A reliable attachment figure can allow the child to create a secure base and enable them to explore and learn confidently.

Although the curriculum provides a strong framework for inclusivity, its successful implementation depends heavily on the skills, attitudes, and resources available to educators. Gay (2018) indicates inclusive leadership requires educators to be well-trained in cultural competence, differentiated instruction, and inclusive practices. In non-maintained nursery settings, variations in staff qualifications and training can result in inconsistent implementation of inclusive techniques. Tomlinson (2014) reveals the limited funding and access to specialised support services in non-maintained nurseries resulting in limited support for children with ALN. According to Villegas and Lucas (2002) professional development can help educators better understand and address the diverse needs of their students.

Additionally Welsh Government (2022) states 'should' throughout the curriculum. An example of this "we should continue to monitor and review the effectiveness of the setting". This does not give specific instructions or make it a compulsory order. This is repeated throughout the curriculum suggesting settings might not do it as it doesn't say "must".

Furthermore Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory states that including families in their education promotes holistic development for the child. The curriculum briefly mentions parents throughout but does not go in depth about building good relationships with families. This will be essential in including the child and celebrating their culture therefore it is significant for parents to be heavily involved at the nursery setting if possible.

Section 3

Inclusive leadership is critical for ensuring that there is an open-door policy at all settings. This will ensure all children are included and supported in educational settings. By promoting a culture of inclusivity, ensuring representation in the curriculum, implementing inclusive policies, fostering a safe environment, engaging families and communities, supporting professional development, and monitoring inclusion efforts, leaders can create supportive and inclusive environments for all students. These actions not only benefit marginalised students but also enrich the educational experience for the entire school community.

As an advocate for inclusive education, fostering inclusivity from the earliest stages of education is crucial for developing well-rounded, empathetic, and culturally competent individuals. Every child is unique (Nijland, Van der Meer and Onderwater (no date). Teacher TV (2015) emphasises the importance of children's own voice and ensuring they use it. Ephgrave (2020) and Teacher TV (2015) both state that including families and carers in the setting allows in depth knowledge on their variety of cultures and allows celebration of diversity. Ephgrave (2020) suggests settings should value the children's differences. This highlights the invisible child and celebrates all children. The Department of Education (DfE) (2014) states that all settings should be anti-discriminatory. Devarakonda (2013) states that inclusive leaders should have knowledge of different cultures. This should be demonstrated around the classroom for example displaying posters of different festivals. However is it significant that there is a more in-depth knowledge on different festivals not just displaying them. This is called cultural appreciation. Devarakonda (2013) states that a more in depth knowledge celebrates diversity and provides a sense of belonging to the child. Banks (2004) theory of multicultural education has 5 concepts. Pedagogy

is one that can be approached by teachers developing their pedagogy strategies to support all the children in their class. This will especially support the minority.

According to Gay (2018) inclusive leadership involves recognising and valuing the unique backgrounds, needs, and potentials of each child. Including cultural teaching techniques in the classroom will give the children a sense of belonging. This could be done through stories, songs and displays around the environment. Banks (2015) states that teaching a multicultural curriculum provides all students with an enhanced understanding of different cultures gaining respect for all.

Inclusive leadership requires continuous learning and growth. According to Gay (2018) providing professional development opportunities focused on cultural competence, anti-bias education, and inclusive teaching practices is essential. Professional development educates teachers with an in-depth knowledge as well as skills to effectively support diverse learners.

Inclusive leaders will need to build and maintain a strong relationship with families and carers. Including families improves the academic development but also introduces the class to a new culture (Epstein, 2018). Families participating in school events, and contributing to decision-making processes creates a more inclusive environment. Additionally, collaborating with community organisations can provide valuable resources and support for both educators and students. There could be a range of different families such as same sex parents, disabled or different cultures.

Creating an inclusive school culture involves setting clear expectations for respect, empathy, and inclusion. According to Ainscow (2020) fostering an inclusive school culture requires a commitment to ongoing reflection and improvement. Regularly assessing the school environment, seeking feedback from students and families, and making necessary adjustments are crucial steps in this process.

While promoting inclusive leadership is essential to early years settings it is also important to recognise and address potential barriers. Inclusive leaders should reflect to identify effective strategies and highlight potential barriers. Bortino *et al.* (2016) reveals inclusive leadership should ensure that any barriers are broken down

from excluding individuals from society. Therefore they will need to focus on factors that risk exclusion in order to identify them and prevent them. These may include resistance to change, lack of resources, and cultural misunderstandings. Inclusive leaders must be proactive in addressing these challenges by advocating for necessary resources, providing clear communication, and fostering a culture of respect. Welsh Government (2022) reveals Te Whariki which is a successful inclusive setting that is based around the unique child and celebrates the individualism of each individual child. Te Whariki meets the targets of the curriculum creating competent and confident learners that are able to feel a sense of belonging at their setting as well as feeling comfortable and safe.

Promoting inclusive leadership in early years settings is significant. By incorporating culture into curriculum, providing professional development for educators and engaging families and communities an inclusive leader can create educational environments where all children feel valued and supported.

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