

Leadership and Management for Systems of quality- reflective paper

Quality can refer to the level of excellence or effectiveness achieved in various contexts, including education, health care, social care, and other areas of public service provision. The UK government has defined quality as "providing a service that is safe, effective, caring, responsive to people's needs and well-led" (Department of Health and Social Care, 2018). In the context of education, HM Government (2019) says quality can be defined as the degree to which educational provision meets the needs of learners and delivers positive outcomes, such as improved academic achievement, social and emotional development, and employability. Quality education also involves the provision of a safe and supportive learning environment and the use of effective teaching and learning methods.

In the context of early years in the UK, quality can be defined as the extent to which early childhood settings promote positive child outcomes, including physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development. Quality early childhood education is critical for children's long-term success and well-being, as it provides a strong foundation for future learning and development. According to the Department for Education in the UK, quality early years provision should be child-centered, provide a safe and stimulating environment, and support children's learning and development through play and exploration (Department for Education, 2021). Additionally, high-quality early years settings should employ knowledgeable and skilled practitioners who are able to provide effective teaching and learning experiences for children (Department for Education, 2021). Research has shown that quality early years provision has a positive impact on children's outcomes in the short and long term. For example, a meta-analysis conducted by Melhuish et al. (2015) found that high-quality early years provision led to improved cognitive, social, and emotional development, as well as better educational and employment outcomes later in life.

In Wales, quality early years experiences are based on the Foundation Phase framework, which focuses on holistic child development and the use of play-based

learning. According to the Welsh Government, high-quality early years provision should provide children with opportunities to learn through play, exploration, and creativity, and support their physical, emotional, and social development (Welsh Government, 2015). Quality early years experiences in Wales are also based on the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which recognizes children's right to play and participate in cultural and artistic activities (Welsh Government, 2015). To ensure that early years provision in Wales meets high standards of quality, the Welsh Government has established a system of inspections and assessments. The Care Inspectorate Wales is responsible for inspecting and regulating early years settings, and the Foundation Phase Profile is used to assess children's learning and development at the end of the Foundation Phase (Welsh Government, 2015). Research has shown that high-quality early years provision in Wales can have a positive impact on children's outcomes. For example, a study by Owen et al. (2018) found that children who attended high-quality early years provision in Wales had better cognitive, social, and emotional development compared to those who attended lower-quality provision.

A good level of quality is essential when working with children in Wales for a number of reasons. First and foremost, high-quality services can have a positive impact on children's development, health, and wellbeing, which are critical factors for their future success and life outcomes. Second, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states that every child has the right to access high-quality education, healthcare, and social services, among other things. Wales, as a signatory of the UNCRC, is committed to upholding these rights and ensuring that children receive the best possible care and support. According to a report by the Welsh Government (2019), high-quality services for children can lead to improved outcomes, including better school attainment, reduced risk-taking behaviors, and increased social mobility. Additionally, research suggests that early childhood experiences can have long-term effects on physical and mental health, as well as social and economic outcomes (Shonkoff et al., 2012). Therefore, it is crucial to provide high-quality services and support during children's early years to ensure they have the best start in life. Furthermore, a good level of quality in services for children is essential for promoting equality and reducing

social inequalities. In Wales, as in many other countries, children from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to experience poor health, lower levels of educational attainment, and social exclusion (Marmot et al., 2010). High-quality services can help to address these inequalities and provide children with the support they need to succeed regardless of their background. Overall, a good level of quality is necessary when working with children in Wales to ensure that their rights are upheld, and that they receive the best possible care and support. By providing high-quality services, we can improve children's outcomes, promote equality, and reduce social inequalities.

In Wales, quality in early years is measured using a variety of tools and frameworks. One of the key frameworks used to assess quality in early years is the Foundation Phase Quality Award (FPQA), which is a voluntary accreditation scheme designed to recognize and promote high-quality provision in settings that deliver the Foundation Phase curriculum (Welsh Government, 2015). The Foundation Phase is a framework for learning and development for children aged 3-7 in Wales, which focuses on experiential learning and play-based activities. The FPQA is based on a set of quality indicators, which cover a range of areas, including the learning environment, pedagogy, and leadership and management. These indicators are designed to assess the quality of provision in relation to the principles and goals of the Foundation Phase framework. The assessment process involves a self-evaluation by the setting, followed by an external evaluation by trained assessors. Another tool used to measure quality in early years in Wales is the Estyn Common Inspection Framework (CIF), which is used to evaluate the quality of provision in all types of education settings, including early years settings. The CIF includes a set of quality indicators, which cover a range of areas, including leadership and management, teaching and learning, and outcomes for children. The indicators are designed to assess the quality of provision in relation to the Welsh Government's vision for education and the expectations of the national curriculum. In addition to these frameworks, the Welsh Government has developed a range of resources to support settings in improving the quality of provision, including the National Quality Improvement Framework for Children's Services and the Childcare Offer for Wales Quality and Sustainability Grant. These resources provide guidance on best

practice and support for improvement planning. In summary, the measurement of quality in early years in Wales is a comprehensive process that involves a range of tools and frameworks, which are designed to assess the quality of provision in relation to the goals and principles of the Foundation Phase and the national curriculum (Estyn, 2021. Welsh Government, 2022. Welsh Government, 2019).

The Leuven Involvement Scale (LIS) is a tool for measuring children's emotional and behavioral engagement in early childhood education and care settings. The LIS was developed by Ferre Laevers and his colleagues at the Centre for Experiential Education at the University of Leuven, Belgium (Laevers, 1997). The LIS is based on the observation of children's behavior and emotional expressions during their activities in the setting. It consists of four levels of engagement, ranging from non-engagement to intense involvement, and includes a range of indicators for each level. The indicators are designed to capture children's emotional expression, concentration, persistence, and enjoyment during their activities. The LIS has been widely used in research and practice in early childhood education and care settings around the world, and has been shown to be a valid and reliable tool for measuring children's engagement (Dalli et al., 2011; Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007). The LIS can be used by practitioners and researchers to evaluate the quality of provision in early childhood education and care settings, and to identify areas for improvement. Overall, the Leuven Involvement Scale is a valuable tool for promoting high-quality provision in early childhood education and care settings, and for measuring children's emotional and behavioral engagement in their activities.

The Quality of Care Report (QCR) is a tool developed by the Welsh Government to evaluate the quality of early childhood education and care settings in Wales. The QCR uses a set of quality indicators to assess different aspects of provision, including leadership and management, learning and development, and health and wellbeing. The QCR is based on self-evaluation by practitioners and is used to identify areas for improvement. The QCR was developed to support the implementation of the Foundation Phase in Wales, which is a framework for early childhood education and

care that emphasizes play-based learning and child-led activities. The QCR is designed to help practitioners reflect on their practice and identify areas for improvement in order to provide high-quality provision that meets the needs of all children. The QCR is used by practitioners in early childhood education and care settings throughout Wales to evaluate the quality of their provision. The report is also used by inspectors from the Care Inspectorate Wales as part of the inspection process (care inspectorate wales, 2019).

The Sustained Shared Thinking and Emotional Wellbeing (SSTEWS) scale is a tool developed to assess and improve the quality of interactions between practitioners and children in early childhood education and care settings. The SSTEWS scale measures the quality of adult-child interactions and assesses different aspects of interaction, including sustained shared thinking, emotional wellbeing, and adult-child interactions. The scale is based on observation of practitioner-child interactions and is designed to help practitioners reflect on their practice and identify areas for improvement. The SSTEWS scale was developed by researchers at the University of Oxford and was funded by the UK Department for Education. The development process involved extensive consultation with practitioners, experts, and researchers in the field of early childhood education and care. The scale has been tested in a range of early childhood education and care settings in the UK and has been found to be a reliable and valid tool for assessing and improving the quality of practitioner-child interactions. The SSTEWS scale consists of 43 items and is designed to be used by trained observers to evaluate practitioner-child interactions. The scale assesses different aspects of interaction, including the quality and frequency of sustained shared thinking, the emotional wellbeing of practitioners and children, and the quality of adult-child interactions. The scale provides a detailed picture of the quality of interactions in early childhood education and care settings and is designed to help practitioners reflect on their practice and identify areas for improvement (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2015).

The Quality of Care Report, Leuven Involvement Scale (LIS), and Sustained Shared Thinking and Emotional Wellbeing (SSTEWS) Scale are all tools used in early childhood

education and care to assess and improve the quality of provision. While there are some similarities between these tools, there are also some key differences. The Quality of Care Report (QCR) is a tool developed by the Welsh Government to evaluate the quality of early childhood education and care settings in Wales. The QCR uses a set of quality indicators to assess different aspects of provision, including leadership and management, learning and development, and health and wellbeing. The QCR is based on self-evaluation by practitioners and is used to identify areas for improvement (Welsh Government, 2015). The Leuven Involvement Scale (LIS), on the other hand, is a tool for measuring children's emotional and behavioral engagement in early childhood education and care settings. The LIS is based on observation of children's behavior during activities and is used to evaluate the quality of provision by measuring the level of children's involvement in their activities (Laevens, 1997). The Sustained Shared Thinking and Emotional Wellbeing (SSTEWS) Scale is a tool for evaluating the quality of interactions between practitioners and children in early childhood education and care settings. The SSTEWS Scale assesses different aspects of interaction, including sustained shared thinking, emotional wellbeing, and adult-child interactions. The SSTEWS Scale is based on observation of practitioner-child interactions and is used to identify areas for improvement in practice (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2015). While the QCR, LIS, and SSTEWS Scale all aim to improve the quality of provision in early childhood education and care, they have some key differences in terms of their focus and methodology. The QCR focuses on overall quality of provision, while the LIS and SSTEWS Scale focus on specific aspects of children's engagement and interaction, respectively. The QCR is based on self-evaluation by practitioners, while the LIS and SSTEWS Scale are based on observation of children's behavior and interactions. To summarize, while the QCR, LIS, and SSTEWS Scale are all important tools for improving the quality of provision in early childhood education and care, they have some key differences in terms of their focus and methodology.

To conclude this paper I think it is clear to see that within Wales the government has introduced many initiatives and policies to promote a high level of quality in all early years settings. In more recent years, looking at the years on the references, there has

been a big push on wellbeing and quality and how you need them both to be a successful setting.

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