

Catalytic leadership- rights, resilience and social change **(ECEY6009)**

Section One

Catalytic Leadership can be referred to terms such as change agents, entrepreneurial leadership, social justice, collective change and inspiring change; all with similar meanings but what does catalytic leadership mean and what is it?

Through history catalytic leaders have been known to build up other people and build teams up, igniting a spark within everyone they meet to inspire change in their community resulting in change around the world (N.A, 2018). Tara Powers' 2017 blog post about catalytic leadership discusses how a catalytic leader is a broad-minded mentor to their peers as well as being present and supportive in encouraging people to stand up for change. Tara goes on further to state that catalytic leaders “are born inspirational”. Are people born with leadership qualities or do they grow up affected by sociological factors that ignite a spark in them to be the one to stand up for change? Further into the blog Tara goes on to give advice on how to become a catalytic leader, contradicting her previous statement of how they are born.

In addition, Mittal, A. and Dhar, R. L (2015) explains Catalytic leadership is a type of leadership style that focuses on inspiring and empowering others to achieve a common goal. This approach involves creating a vision and a clear sense of purpose, and then using that vision to motivate and guide individuals to work together towards the common goal. A catalytic leader encourages creativity and innovation by promoting an environment of open communication, collaboration, and trust. They prioritize the growth and development of their team, providing them with the tools, resources, and support needed to succeed. Catalytic leaders are also adept at managing change with their clear communication skills. They are able to adapt to shifting circumstances, remain flexible and responsive to emerging trends, and motivate their team to do the same. Ultimately, the goal of catalytic leadership is to create a positive, engaging, and

productive work environment that fosters a shared sense of purpose and promotes the success of everyone.

Moving on, Catalytic leadership can be demonstrated in the early years through a variety of approaches that focus on empowering children and promoting their development. Here are a few examples:

- Encouraging creativity and innovation: A catalytic leader in the early years would encourage children to explore their interests and develop their own ideas. They would provide opportunities for children to experiment with different materials, express themselves through art, music and movement, and engage in open-ended play.
- Supporting growth and development: A catalytic leader would provide children with the tools and resources they need to succeed, including access to high-quality educational materials, opportunities for physical activity and healthy nutrition, and emotional support and encouragement.
- Promoting collaboration and teamwork: Catalytic leaders would encourage children to work together, developing their social and communication skills, and building a sense of community within the early years setting.
- Demonstrating flexibility and adaptability: A catalytic leader in the early years would be able to adapt to changing circumstances and emerging trends, remaining responsive to the needs of children and families.

Overall, catalytic leadership in the early years involves creating a positive, engaging, and supportive environment that fosters children's learning and development, and empowers them to achieve their full potential (Munoz,M.A. and Villarroel, V., 2018).

Leadership is crucial in early years for multiple reasons. Waniganayake, M. Et.Al, (2016), gives a brief overview of some of the key reasons why leadership is important in early years:

- Shaping the learning environment: Effective leaders can create a learning environment that promotes the social, emotional, and cognitive development of

young children. They can establish a positive culture, set clear expectations, and provide resources and support to enable children to achieve their full potential.

- Supporting the development of educators: Leaders can support the ongoing development of early childhood educators, providing opportunities for training and professional development. This can help educators stay up-to-date with the latest research and best practices, and provide the highest quality care and education to young children.
- Engaging families and communities: Early childhood leaders can build partnerships with families and communities, providing support, resources, and information to help them support their children's development. This can foster a strong sense of community and enhance the quality of care and education provided to young children.
- Ensuring compliance with regulations: Early childhood leaders are responsible for ensuring that their programs comply with relevant regulations and policies, such as those related to health and safety, curriculum standards, and staff qualifications. This requires strong leadership and management skills to ensure that all aspects of the program are running smoothly.

However, As with any leadership approach, there may be challenges to being a catalytic leader when working with children. Here are a few examples of these difficulties:

- Balancing structure and flexibility: A catalytic leader may need to balance the need for structure and routine with the importance of flexibility and innovation. Finding the right balance can be challenging, as too much structure can stifle creativity and too little can lead to chaos.
- Building trust and rapport: Building positive relationships with children and families is a key component of catalytic leadership. However, building trust and rapport with children and families can be challenging, particularly in contexts where there may be cultural or language barriers.
- Managing change: Catalytic leaders often strive to promote change and innovation within their organizations. However, managing change can be

challenging, particularly when there may be resistance from staff or other stakeholders (Cote-Meek, S. and Taylor, D. 2016).

With this in mind, Effective leadership can play a crucial role in supporting children experiencing sociological difficulties. Here's a brief overview of how this can be achieved:

- Providing a supportive and inclusive environment: Effective leadership can create a positive and inclusive environment that promotes the social and emotional development of all children. This can include strategies such as building positive relationships with children and families, promoting respect and empathy, and providing opportunities for children to develop self-regulation skills.
- Offering targeted support: Effective leaders can identify children who may be experiencing sociological difficulties and provide targeted support to help them overcome these challenges. This can include providing additional resources or staffing, developing personalized plans to support children's learning and development, and working with families and other professionals to address children's needs.
- Fostering partnerships with families and communities: Effective leadership involves engaging families and communities in supporting children's development. This can include developing partnerships with local organizations, providing resources and information to families, and encouraging their active participation in their children's education and care. (Trevethan, J, and Goff, J. 2018).

Sociological factors can have a significant impact on children's education. Pettit, B. and Hook, J.L. (2018) Here is a brief overview of some most common factors affecting education:

- Socioeconomic status: Children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may face a range of challenges that can impact their educational outcomes, such as inadequate nutrition, lack of access to healthcare, and limited educational resources.

- Race and ethnicity: Racial and ethnic disparities in education can arise due to factors such as discrimination, stereotypes, and cultural differences.
- Family and community support: Children who have strong support from their families and communities are more likely to succeed in school than those who do not. Factors such as parental involvement, community resources, and peer influences can all play a role in shaping children's educational experiences.
- Language and cultural barriers: Children who speak languages other than the language of instruction may face barriers to learning, as may children who come from cultural backgrounds that differ from those of their teachers or peers.

Continuing on, an outstanding example of a catalytic leader could be Ella Baker. Ella Baker is less known than the events she played a hand in, the student Nonviolent coordinating committee (SNCC), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). All groups have had significant effects on how the black community has progressed through history, gaining their human rights and more (EllabakerCentre, N.D).

Another example of catalytic leadership is Reggio Emilia. Reggio Emilia is an Italian movement that happened after the second world war regarding the education of the local children. Parents wanted a safe place their children could attend to socialize with other children as well as develop their cognitive abilities. Due to the time being post world war the community banded together to ensure the best for the children and this meant selling a tank and livestock to make the first preschool which would soon become the first of seven (N.A, 2015). This has influenced contemporary teaching methods today as the approach Mallaguzzi made with Reggio Emilia has been passed through generations and has made its way around the globe to be implemented into education in modern age (Munday,A. 2016).

Going further with Reggio Emilia, Gandini, L and Edwards, C.P (2002) considers some ways that the Reggio Emilia approach exemplifies leadership in early years:

- Building a culture of collaboration: The Reggio Emilia approach emphasizes the importance of building a culture of collaboration among teachers, children, and families. This involves creating an environment that supports communication, teamwork, and shared decision-making, and promotes a sense of community and belonging.
- Fostering creativity and innovation: The Reggio Emilia approach emphasizes the importance of creativity and innovation in learning, and provides opportunities for children to explore, experiment, and express themselves through a variety of media, such as drawing, painting, and sculpture.
- Encouraging a child-centered approach: The Reggio Emilia approach emphasizes the importance of tailoring learning experiences to the needs and interests of individual children, rather than adhering to a one-size-fits-all approach. This involves developing a deep understanding of each child's strengths, interests, and learning style, and providing opportunities for them to explore and learn in ways that are meaningful and engaging.

Section Two

Starting her seven year run in April 2022 Rocio Cifuentes became the new and current Children's commissioner for wales (Children's Commissioner for wales, n.d). Under the what we do section of the children's commissioner website it outlines the role of the Children's Commissioner for Wales is to promote and safeguard the rights and welfare of children and young people in Wales. The Commissioner acts as an advocate for their interests and needs, and works to ensure that their voices are heard and their views are taken into account in decision-making processes. Here are some of the specific responsibilities of the Children's Commissioner for Wales:

- Advocating for children's rights and welfare: The Children's Commissioner for Wales has a duty to promote and protect the rights of children and young people in Wales, and to advocate for their welfare in all areas of life. This involves working with government, policy makers, and other stakeholders to ensure that children's voices are heard and their rights are respected.

- Investigating concerns and complaints: The Children's Commissioner for Wales has the power to investigate concerns and complaints relating to the welfare of children and young people in Wales, and to make recommendations to improve their situation. This includes conducting research, gathering evidence, and engaging with stakeholders to identify areas of concern and to make recommendations for improvement.
- Providing advice and guidance: The Children's Commissioner for Wales provides advice and guidance to children, young people, parents, carers, and professionals on a range of issues related to children's rights and welfare. This includes providing information on services and support available to children and young people, and offering guidance on how to make complaints or raise concerns.

The Children's Commissioner for Wales is an independent office established in 2001 under the Children Act 2004. The Commissioner is responsible for promoting and safeguarding the rights and welfare of children and young people in Wales, and acts as an advocate for their interests and needs. Before the establishment of the Children's Commissioner for Wales, there was no statutory provision for promoting and safeguarding the rights of children and young people in Wales. The idea of establishing a children's commissioner was first proposed in the Welsh Assembly's White Paper on Children at Risk in 1999, which recommended the creation of an independent office to advocate for children's rights and promote their welfare. The Children's Commissioner for Wales was formally established in 2001 through the Children Act 2004, which gave the Commissioner a range of powers and duties to promote and safeguard the rights of children and young people in Wales. Since its establishment, the office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales has played an important role in advocating for children's rights and promoting their welfare in a variety of areas, including education, health, social care, and the criminal justice system (Children's commissioner for Wales, n.d).

As the role of the Children's Commissioner for Wales is to promote and safeguard the rights and welfare of children and young people in Wales. While the Commissioner has a range of powers and duties to fulfill this role, the effectiveness of their work can be influenced by a number of factors. In this response, I will explore the role of the

Children's Commissioner for Wales and some of the challenges and opportunities they face, with reference to relevant sources. One of the key responsibilities of the Children's Commissioner for Wales is to advocate for the rights and welfare of children and young people in Wales. This involves engaging with government, policy makers, and other stakeholders to ensure that children's voices are heard and their needs are addressed. The Commissioner has the power to investigate concerns and complaints relating to the welfare of children and young people, and to make recommendations to improve their situation. However, the effectiveness of the Children's Commissioner for Wales can be influenced by a number of factors. One of the key challenges is ensuring that the Commissioner's work is sufficiently resourced and supported. This includes having adequate funding and staffing, as well as political support and recognition for the importance of the Commissioner's work. Another challenge is ensuring that the Commissioner's work is accessible and inclusive, and that the voices and perspectives of diverse groups of children and young people are heard and taken into account. This includes working to overcome barriers to participation and engagement, and ensuring that the Commissioner's work is sensitive to the needs and experiences of different communities and groups. Despite these challenges, the Children's Commissioner for Wales has the potential to play an important role in promoting and safeguarding the rights and welfare of children and young people in Wales. By working collaboratively with other stakeholders and advocating for the needs of children and young people, the Commissioner can help to ensure that their voices are heard and their rights are respected (children's commissioner for Wales, n d; Thomas, N. 2014).

Both United Nation conventions on rights initiatives are discussed within the publication "The right way" by the children's commissioner; but what are they? The United Nations treaty collection (n.d) outlines that the UNCRC and UNCRPD are two international human rights treaties that aim to protect the rights of children and persons with disabilities, respectively. The UNCRC, or the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, is a treaty that was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989. It outlines the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of children, and seeks to ensure that all children are treated with dignity and respect. The UNCRC has

been ratified by 196 countries worldwide, making it the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. The UNCRPD, or the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, is a treaty that was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2006. It outlines the human rights of persons with disabilities and seeks to promote their full and equal participation in society. The UNCRPD has been ratified by 182 countries worldwide. Both the UNCRC and UNCRPD represent important steps towards protecting and promoting the rights of some of the most vulnerable members of society. However, the implementation and enforcement of these treaties varies widely between countries, and there is still much work to be done to ensure that the rights outlined in these treaties are fully realized.

“The Right Way” is a publication by the Children’s commissioner for Wales which provides guidance to public bodies in Wales on how to incorporate the UNCRC and UNCRPD into their work . The publication provides practical guidance and advice to public bodies on how to incorporate human rights into their policies, decision-making processes, and service delivery. It also includes examples from settings of good practice, helping public bodies to understand how a human rights approach can be applied in practice. “The Right Way” was first published in 2004 and has since been updated to reflect changes in legislation and policy. Its aim is to ensure that the rights of children are taken into account in all aspects of public policy and decision-making in Wales (children’s commissioner for Wales, 2022).

"The Right Way" publication by the Children's Commissioner for Wales is generally well-regarded as a practical guide to help public bodies incorporate the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into their work. However, there are some criticisms that can be made. One critique is that "The Right Way" is primarily focused on public bodies in Wales, and does not provide guidance for the private sector or other non-governmental organizations. While public bodies have a responsibility to uphold the rights of children, it is also important that other organizations understand their role in protecting children's rights. Another critique is that while "The Right Way" provides practical guidance on how to incorporate the UNCRC into policies and

decision-making processes, it does not provide guidance on how to measure the impact of these policies on children's lives. It is important to evaluate the effectiveness of policies and initiatives to ensure that they are actually improving outcomes for children. Finally, some critics argue that "The Right Way" is not radical enough in its approach to children's rights. They argue that rather than just incorporating the UNCRC into existing policies and practices, there should be a more fundamental shift towards a children's rights-based approach in all areas of society. Despite these criticisms, "The Right Way" publication is an important resource for public bodies in Wales and has helped to raise awareness of the UNCRC and the importance of protecting children's rights (Save The Children, 2015).

Section Three- Parental Mental Health

Parental mental health refers to the mental health of parents or caregivers who are responsible for the care of children. This can include a range of mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and other conditions that can affect a person's ability to function effectively in their role as a parent. The impact of parental mental health on children can be significant, with research showing that children of parents with mental health problems are at increased risk of experiencing a range of negative outcomes, including developmental delays, emotional and behavioral problems, academic difficulties, and social isolation. It is important to note that while parental mental health can have negative consequences for children, it is not always the case. Many parents with mental health problems are able to provide safe and nurturing care for their children with the appropriate support and treatment (Beardslee et al., 2011; National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2018).

Parental mental health can have a significant impact on children, with research indicating that children of parents with mental health problems are at increased risk of experiencing a range of negative outcomes. Some of the impacts of parental mental health on children are:

- Emotional and behavioral problems: Children of parents with mental health problems are at higher risk of experiencing emotional and behavioral problems, including anxiety, depression, and conduct disorders (Beardslee et al., 2011).
- Academic difficulties: Children of parents with mental health problems may struggle academically due to disruptions to their home life, such as changes in routine or lack of support for homework and study (Van Doesum et al., 2013).
- Social isolation: Children of parents with mental health problems may experience social isolation due to their parent's symptoms or stigma associated with mental illness (Hancock et al., 2018).
- Physical health problems: Children of parents with mental health problems may be at increased risk of physical health problems due to factors such as neglect or inadequate care (Manuel et al., 2015).

It is important to note that these negative impacts are not inevitable, and many children of parents with mental health problems are able to thrive with the appropriate support and treatment. However, it is essential that the mental health needs of parents are recognized and addressed in order to promote the well-being of children.

In the UK, there are a range of services available to support children whose parents experience mental health difficulties. Some examples of these services include:

- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS): These are specialist services that provide assessment and treatment for children and young people with mental health problems, as well as support for their families.
- Young Carers Services: These services provide support to children and young people who care for a family member with a disability, illness or addiction, including those with parents with mental health problems.
- Family support services: These services provide practical and emotional support to families experiencing a range of difficulties, including those related to parental mental health.
- Parent-infant mental health services: These services provide support to parents and their infants, with a focus on promoting positive parent-child relationships and early attachment.

- The effectiveness of these services in supporting children and families affected by parental mental health has been evaluated in a number of studies. For example, a systematic review of interventions for children of parents with mental illness found that interventions that included individual and family-focused approaches were effective in improving child outcomes (Reupert et al., 2017). Another review found that interventions that addressed parenting skills and family communication were effective in improving child well-being (Maybery et al., 2012).

However, it is important to note that not all services may work for all families, and access to services can vary depending on factors such as geographical location and availability of funding. Ongoing evaluation and improvement of services is necessary to ensure that they are effective and meeting the needs of families.

Lloyd-Richardson, E. Perron, B (2018) outlines how Schools can play an important role in supporting children whose parents are struggling with mental health issues. Some ways in which schools can support these children include:

- Providing a safe and supportive environment: Schools can provide a safe and nurturing environment for children, which can be especially important if they are experiencing instability or stress at home due to their parent's mental health issues.
- Offering counseling services: Schools can offer counseling services to children who may be struggling with the emotional impact of their parent's mental health issues. This can provide children with a safe and confidential space to talk about their feelings and concerns.
- Developing individualized support plans: Schools can work with children and their families to develop individualized support plans that address their specific needs and concerns. This may include accommodations such as additional academic support, flexibility with deadlines, and adjustments to schedules.
- Providing information and resources: Schools can provide children and their families with information and resources about mental health, including how to access support services and strategies for coping with stress and anxiety.

Despite these potential benefits, schools may also experience limitations in supporting children whose parents are struggling with mental health issues. For example, schools may not have the resources or expertise to provide specialized mental health services, and may face limitations in terms of funding and staffing. In addition, schools may face challenges in identifying children who may be at risk or in need of support, as families may not always disclose information about their mental health issues due to stigma or fear of judgment. Overall, schools can play an important role in supporting children whose parents are struggling with mental health issues, but it is important to recognize the potential limitations and challenges that may arise in this context.

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