

What is reflection and reflective practice?

According to Brock (2013), reflection is an important process that professional practitioners use in many different sectors and is a vital skill that allows an individual to reflect on a situation and critically think about what action needs to be taken to encourage valuable change. Reflective practice is critical and is required for progression in education, training and care settings, Brock (2013) states that reflection can be linked to three Greek philosophers; Plato, Socrates and Aristotle which shows how long the theory has been around.

Brock (2013) explains varied assessments are carried out by professional practitioners through observation in activities or from experiences, learning journals or portfolios and once completed, a reflective evaluation can be formed by examining the result. The practitioner can find ways to improve by analysing what worked and why or areas that was not successful and areas that may need to be altered going forward.

Similarly, Hallett (2013) also indicates it is important to be able to use reflective skills in practice, as a professional practitioner needs to be able to review what has happened and identify any changes that need to be made to improve practice and to have a better understanding of what a child or client needs. Another point Hallett (2013) claims is that working with others can help by strengthening an individual's own ability to problem solve by looking at ways to alter activities for future tasks so that it will then have a more positive outcome. Also, working alongside colleagues can encourage discussions that could result in other practitioners sharing views or techniques. Hallett (2013) suggests another positive outcome of when an individual communicates with other practitioners is that it allows an individual to receive constructive feedback or the ability to give feedback which will contribute ways to improve provision and practice that overall helps the children, the children's family and whole team.

The University of Hull (2022) also agrees with Hallett (2013) by suggesting reflection is an important skill to have as a professional practitioner, as it allows an individual to welcome new learning skills as a result of analysing previous experiences. Another point The University of Hull (2022) highlighted is the importance to look at the positive outcomes, as negative experiences are often what a practitioner focuses on and can overlook the good points from the activity.

Reflection with the early years setting

Hallett (2013) suggest professional practitioners should have strong reflective skills due to the frequent changes in the early years setting. According to Hallett (2013) the early years setting has changed due to the evolving government led policy, as the government changed the approach and looked at international influences. Once the government had analysed how other countries used reflection and the positive outcome it had on the other countries child care settings. The new policy highlights the importance of reflection and how professional practitioners should use it in practice to benefit and improve a child's development.

Also, Hallett (2013) indicates the reason why practitioners should use reflective practice is it can benefit the children and families as it can result in higher quality experiences. The role of the practitioner within the early years setting is to highlight areas that need changing which will result in having a better understanding of what needs building on to improve the quality of the children's wellbeing and learning progression.

Hallett (2013) suggests to be able to reflect there are three questions a practitioner needs to think about. First question, "What is happening?" this is when the practitioner in a child care setting for example, will note down a descriptive overview of the activity or experience a child may be participating in. Secondly, "How is it happening?" which is followed by an explanation why it has been chosen and detailed more in-depth to support the activity and why it is beneficial. Lastly, "What can change?" this is when the practitioner reflects and makes observations on the result of the activity or experience. A practitioner will then look at parts that worked well, or any areas that did not by analysing the outcome to see what changes need to be put in place or what extra provisions can be added onto future activities that will benefit the child's health, social and education needs.

Reflection within professional practice

Tarrant (2013) indicates many authorities have a structured approach to reflection and use a yearly review to support professionals. Although Tarrant (2013) suggests the strategy is more aimed at the professionals' career development rather than a reflection. Tarrant (2013) agrees looking at the individuals' overall strengths and weaknesses over a year is a must, it fails to reflect on what actually went well or what needs improving, where a process plan can be put in place to help with future provisions. Tarrant (2013) explains in Scotland, professionals use a different approach and are encouraged to use a reflective portfolio, which tracks personal and professional reflection. Therefore, Tarrant (2013) indicates the benefits of keeping a portfolio helps to take responsibility of an individual's own professional development. Tarrant (2013) suggest it gives the professional a way to describe, analyse, explain and reflect on experiences and what they have achieved or identify what areas they need to develop. Reed and Walker (2015) suggest a journal that an individual can use to record what they have witnessed, how the individual felt and what the practitioner understood from an experience will allow them to analyse the data which will clarify any challenges or changes they need to make to help personal development which will enhance practice. Reed and Walker (2015) describe the journal as a "critical friend", which will support continual development and evaluate the practitioner's skills and knowledge.

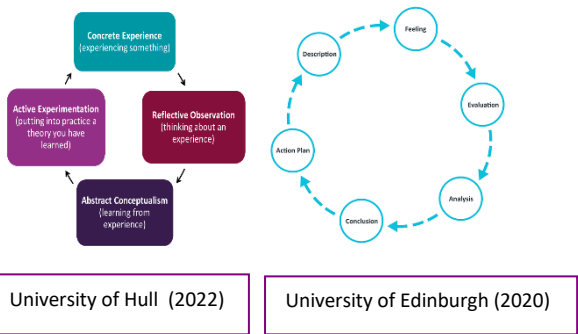
Flying Start NHS	
Record of Learning Activity	
Title of Learning Activity:	
Description of learning/professional development activity:	
Key learning points:	
Impact on your practice:	
Future actions/ Areas of development:	
Relation to Pillar(s):	
NHSGGC Practice Education Facilitators 2020	

The main theorists of reflection

Brock (2013) indicates there are three main theorists in relation to reflection; Schön, Dewey and Eraut, who each had their own theories on reflective thinking. Schon (quoted in Brock 2013) theorised there needs to be an agreement between practice, knowledge and experience that allows an individual to reflect. According to Schön practice practitioners need to reflect in action and use tacit, for example whilst in an activity or experiment where the practitioner needs to reconsider the situation. So if it is not benefiting the children and working towards provisional targets and act immediately to make changes. Reflection on action happens once the activity has been completed and the practitioner will use reflective and critical thinking skills to analyse and consider making changes. There are a familiar phrase's that are used daily that have the same meaning as reflective practitioner, such as "Let me think about this one" or "Let me ponder or reflect on it" explains Moon (2005). The second pioneer, Dewey (quoted in Brock 2013) believed individuals would need to develop the skills to be able to demonstrate reflective thinking. These skills would enable a practitioner to analyse what has happened and reflect on any changes that may need to occur. This thought process would create a deeper thinking process therefore a greater understanding intellectually. Dewey (quoted in Brock 2013) also indicates when a practitioner is observing they need to be using a wide range of skills such as, problem solving, thinking and open-mindedness. Moon (2005) suggests the Dewey's theory aimed to help understand the way a human functioned and describes Dewey's theory as a vital part of the study of reflection. The third pioneer, Eraut (quoted in Brock 2013) believed working with others and sharing experiences encourages a professional practitioner to gain new skills by observing others with the possibility of learning new ways of practice. Eraut theory also suggests by working in a team of professionals, allows the practitioner to analyse others tacit knowledge and share conclusions when reflecting.

Models of reflection

Although there are a number of different models that support reflection, The Gibbs' Reflection Cycle and Kolb's Experiential cycle are two of the most popular cyclical models to use when looking at methods and ways to reflect as they are both simple to follow. According to The University of Edinburgh (2020). Graham Gibbs developed Gibb's Reflective Cycle in 1988 to be used as a framework that will allow professional practitioners to examine experiences as it covers six stages: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion followed by an action plan. Gibbs' reflective cycle allows a practitioner to examine the experience by given a detailed description of each stage and looking at the individuals' feelings during and after the activity. The practitioner can then analyse all the points made during the experience and determine what worked well and what failed, followed by what the individual can take from the activities as a new learning skill or what they would do differently next time. The last part of the cycle is where the practitioner will make an action plan with the conclusion and make any appropriate changes to ensure the future activities will receive a more positive outcome that is beneficial. The University of Edinburgh (2020) also Gibb's cycle can be used in repeated situations that happens frequently or one-off situations. The University of Hull suggests Kolb's (1984) cycle is also structured to help professional practitioners learn from experiences as it was designed to help an individual reflect of what they are thinking. Kolb's cycle model has four stages. The first stage of the cycle is called "Concrete Experience", where the practitioner needs to describe a new or familiar experience in detail. The second stage is called "Reflective Observation" which the practitioner is required to reflect on what happened during the experience, how they felt and how it links to previous experiences and skills used. Following with the information observed in the second stage, an individual can follow on to the third stage, "Abstract Conceptualism" which is the stage where an individual will analyse the results of the experience and focus on areas that worked and areas that did not, and look at solutions for further improvements. To finalise the cycle, the final stage "Active Experimentation" is taking the information gained from reflecting on the experience and moving forward with a plan of action to demonstrate what the individual has learnt and to test the new theory.



Professional practitioners use reflection when observing in settings to reflect on what has happened, and analyse the outcome to see if any changes need to be made. It could be useful to use a reflective form to have a written piece of evidence to show the results, and have a plan for any future provisions that need to be put in place. The reflective form can also be used to show the progression a child has made for example, or on the other hand any provisions that have not met the target or aim and need extra support. Reflection forms can also be useful to record a person's own professional development to help grow skills and knowledge.

Conclusion

Using reflection as a method and key skill that ensures a professional practitioner is delivering a well thought and beneficial practice to the setting that the individual is involved in. With the knowledge gained from using reflective practice when analysing activities, the information can be tailored to an individual child or group, to ensure the best practice and highest quality of practice is maintained which will result in an improved learning system that will help with progression. The vital skill can also be used for personal reasons as a way to reflect on personal changes that may need to occur for an individual to gain more knowledge and help with profession development.

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