

Becoming a reflective practitioner

Introduction

This paper supports practitioners to develop their reflective practice and develop an understanding on how reflective practice can support practitioners and children’s learning. Brock (2015) defines reflection as when an individual looks back on experiences to evaluate that experience, to improve their practice. Appleby (2010) describes how reflective practice is a continuing learning journey and never stops, it is also seen as a journey that can be personal and professional to practice. Moyles (2010) believes that practitioners will want to improve their practice continuously to support the welfare for children, adults and those who they work with. Hayes (2007) believes that having this awareness helps practitioners to develop evaluations and become better at decision making, this changes the standard of experiences for children to support their development.

Introducing Reflection into early years settings

London Business Schools (no date) proposes that beginning the reflection journey introducing small amounts of reflecting to get use to the reflection process can be beneficial. London Business Schools (no date) states that individuals can do this by questioning themselves, talking with others, and individuals finding the best way for them to reflect successfully, and of which are beneficial to them and their practice. Lindon and Trodd (2016) suggest when an individual starts their reflective learning journey, that it might be helpful to write down and document the reflection. Craft and Paige-smith (2011) agrees with this by saying that documenting reflection, it can help to look back in the future on these documents to continue developing future practice, and to show the progression of an individual's professional practice.

NHS Education for Scotland (no date) states that reflective accounts can also be used to provide evidence for a learning journey and to meet learning objectives. Edwards (no date) add to this by suggesting the use of videos and voice notes to record a reflection to listen back on. The use of pictures is also encouraged by Edwards (no date) as it is believed that they are more reachable for other practitioners to access. Brock (2015) suggests that reflecting with others, may provide a better understanding of reflection. For instance, by reflecting with others such as managers and colleagues, can enable a person to think deeply about the specific experience, as well as having someone to ask the individual questions on their experience, enabling a deeper connection with the experience. Brock (2015) states that reflecting with other can be based upon observing another person’s practice, reading case studies, following another person within their day practice, and being involved within conversations with others.

Reflection and reflective practice

Lindon and Trodd (2016) believes that it is important for a person to reflect if their profession requires a hands-on practical side, for example a practitioner working within the early years. Lindon and Trodd (2016) describes this through a practitioner’s role including contact with adults and children within their day to day responsibilities, while also providing the best experiences for children. To provide this Paige-Smith and Craft (2011) understands that the needs for reflective practice, which consists of the practitioner reflecting. Reed (2011) points out that reflective practice involves investigating an individual’s own practice and those that surround them, and exploring their professionalism and how they respond to being professionals. Reed (2011) suggests that reflective practice changes how our leadership skills are formed, how individuals respond to teamwork and how an individual might respond to the children within their care. Paige – Smith and Craft (2011) adds to this by stating that throughout reflecting, practitioners will be able to adjust their practice, by improving the care they provide for children and experiences they and the children receive. Learning and Teaching Scotland (2010) believe that practitioners should consider reflecting on a child’s rights, the relationships they hold with parents, carers and children, while at the same time, providing quality care that children receive and how they respect those around them.

When practitioners reflect, they may do this by reflecting in practice and reflecting on practice. Anderson (2022) explains Schon’s theory on reflection-in-action as when the person reflects when carrying out an event there and then. For instance, an individual might have to change how the activity is being carried out, to make it more suitable for all children’s needs. Anderson (2022) also explains reflection-on-action as when a person looks back on the event, that they have experienced, to find how the outcome may be changed next time to meet their desired outcome. Tan (2020) argues that reflecting in action is more beneficial than reflecting on action. Tan (2020) has reason to believe this as when reflecting in action, changes can be made instantly to reach the desired outcome, whereas reflecting on action requires the experience to be over. Tan (2020) has an understanding that when reflecting in action, the situation speaks back to the practitioner. This enables the practitioner to have an additional vision of the experience, and that from practitioners reflecting in action, they have control over the activity and the hopeful outcome.

REFLECTIVE ACCOUNTS FORM

You must use this form to record five written reflective accounts on your CPD and/or practice-related feedback and/or an event or experience in your practice and how this relates to the Code. Please fill in a page for each of your reflective accounts, making sure you do not include any information that might identify a specific patient, service user, colleague or other individuals. Please refer to our guidance on preserving anonymity in the section on non-identifiable information in how to revalidate with the NMC.

Reflective account:

What was the nature of the CPD activity and/or practice-related feedback and/or event or experience in your practice?

What did you learn from the CPD activity and/or feedback and/or event or experience in your practice?

How did you change or improve your practice as a result?

How is this relevant to the Code?
Select one or more boxes: Promote people - Practice effectively - Preserve safety - Promote professionalisation and trust

(Source, Nursing & Midwifery Council, 2021)

How a reflective practitioner can support children

Lindon and Trodd (2016) expresses how being a professional practitioner requires reflection, as the person should be wanting to develop their professionalism and knowledge further to support children and adults. Lindon and Trodd (2016) also suggests that when reflecting, it involves an individual to think about their professional practice by looking back on their day-to-day practice, for example, an individual may reflect on their communication skills with adults and the children, to develop experiences that are positive. This can include listening to the voice of the child. Unicef (no date) states that The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Article 12 and Article 31 supports listening to the voice of the child, including their view and thoughts and supporting a child's right to play. This can include following their interests within play and then setting activities surrounding their interests they have shown. This requires practitioners to evaluate and reflect what the child has demonstrated, and how activities can be developed to support the child's interests. Canning (2010) believes that children within play, create their own pathways for their play and learning, and for the practitioner to support this, they should reflect on the child's play and how that child captured their involvement within play for their development to be supported. Canning (2010) understands that throughout reflecting on this, then the correct planning support for a child's play can be supported and followed through being a reflective practitioner. NCFE CACHE (no date) agrees with the above by stating practitioners must reflect on how children learn and apply these to practice to fully support children's further development.

Practitioners will reflect upon children's observations. Birth to 5 Matters (no date) explains how practitioners will reflect on assessment and observations constantly to supporting a child's development and how individual support should be received. Birth to 5 Matters (no date) also states how through a child's observations and assessments, practitioners can reflect upon the education that they provide children with. Birth to 5 Matters (no date) suggests when reflecting on a child's observations, practitioners should come together to discuss these, this provides a moment for the practitioners reflect in a group, which can enable a greater understanding of the child's development. Practitioners may do this by questioning resources within the setting, are they appropriate, how materials and areas may need to be improved (Birth to 5 Matters, no date).

Conclusion

In conclusion reflection is an important part to a practitioner's day to day practice, and not only supports their professional development, but their colleagues, parents, carers and children's development. Through Schon's, Gibbs and Kolb's theories, it is evident that practitioners must either reflect in action or go through experiences first before evaluating on the experience to be able to learn from the experience, and to reflect upon it. From evaluating experience, practitioners can develop their professional practice further, to not only support them but children and adults that they may work with. A practitioner may use a variety of different ways to reflect, including documentation, videos, photos, and recordings, allowing them to review their professional development and their progress within being a professional practitioner.

Theory and Models of reflection

Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle is explained by McLeod (2017) as a process involving an individual's cognitive skills and is adaptable to different circumstances. McLeod (2017) explains how Kolb believed that each learner had to go through each stage of his four stages within the learning cycle to ensure practitioners have reflected thoroughly and have gained knowledge from reflecting upon an experience. Chan (2012) analyses the 4 stages of Kolb's theory. The first stage is Concrete Experience, involving what the individual participated in. Leading on from this, the second stage is Reflection Observation which consists of the individual reflecting on the experience. For instance, an individual may ask themselves, what went well and how they may have felt. Depending on the outcome, Chan (2012) explains the third stage, which is Abstract Conceptualisation when the individual starts forming their own personal theories on their own beliefs. The last stage is Active Experimentation, which Chan (2012) explains this is when what has been reflected on is then placed into practice. McLeod (2017) points out that if a stage is missed, then the reflective practice would not be as effective to develop a learning journey. This model may not be achievable for a practitioner to carry out if they would reflect while carrying out an experience. Although, Institute for Experiential Learning (no date) believes that through the experiential learning process, it can assist the practitioner to advance their practice, knowledge and growth of their continuing professional development.

Gibb's reflective cycle is built upon Kolb's experiential learning cycle (Paterson, C. and Chapman, J, 2013). Husebø, O'Regan and Nestel (2015) states that Gibb's reflective cycle believes that reflection should happen following an experience. Gibb's reflective cycle focuses on producing a system in which the reflection cycle should follow. Husebø, O'Regan and Nestel (2015) states that this cycle provides practitioners with questions for practitioners to follow when reflecting, which focus on an individual's emotions, views and changes to follow later. Active Social Care Limited (no date) looks closely at the cycle, starting with an explanation of the event, strategy if the event occurred again, emotions that were felt, assessment of event, conclusion and analysing the situation. Husebø, O'Regan and Nestel (2015) suggests that Gibb's reflective cycle is well organised, making it easy for practitioners to follow when reflecting, and is supportive to practitioners when starting their reflective learning journey. University of Edinburgh (2020) states that this reflective cycle can either be done individually or within a group discussion to support each other within the reflective journey.

These models and theory of reflection are quite similar and different at the same time. Gibb's reflective cycle is developed from Kolb's experiential learning, meaning that Gibb's may be more detailed. Gibb's theory also enables practitioners to reflect in practice, which saves time for practitioners, and change their practice there and then to reach their wanted outcomes. Although, Kolb's theory can allow practitioners to think more deeply about the experience and have a further evaluation of the experience, supporting their practice further.

(Source, Inspiring Business Performance, 2018)



(Source, ISC Medica, 2019)

