

2405790 ECEY4009C

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Professional Practitioner portfolio

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I have not used any AI in my assignment.

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Personal Development Plan

The thinking, knowledge, skills and behaviours that I will change and develop in order to achieve my vision and goals, adhere to my values and become as resilient as possible

No	Improvement and Development Goals	Success Criteria (How I will know when I have made this change)	The actions I will take to achieve the goal	Timelines	What will this help me to achieve?	Achievements (3 monthly review)
1	Complete my application of number qualification.	Feel confident to sit an exam and be able to complete mock papers prior. I will receive a certificate stating my qualification.	I will need to revise various areas of mathematics and seek support in areas I find difficult to understand.	3-6 months	This will be a requirement in many careers so it could open up more opportunities.	
2	Explore different career paths within Early Years Education and Care.	I will have further knowledge on the different careers in Early Years.	I will speak to career advisors and take notes of relevant information. Speak and take advice from professionals that already work in the field. I will also research about jobs and responsibilities to further my knowledge.	12-18 months	This will help me to know what I am working towards and choose a career path suited to me within Early Years.	

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No	Improvement and Development Goals	Success Criteria (How I will know when I have made this change)	The actions I will take to achieve the goal	Timelines	What will this help me to achieve?	Achievements (3 monthly review)
3	Develop my academic and IT skills.	During my studies I could take feedback from my lecturers regarding my skills and review my assignments overtime to see how much I have improved.	Trial new strategies within my academic skills and follow up feedback from assignments to do better in future. Use the academic skills assignment research to support my personal development. Use online resources and find courses to develop my IT skills.	1-2 years	Developing my academic and IT skills will help me when applying for jobs, completing assignments, making CV's and in everyday life.	
4	Leading intervention programme for phase.	I will be able to complete the assessments with individuals, embed the intervention from the beginning of term and be able to support other Teaching Assistants when they take the programme on board.	I will take training from the previous lead. I will also take support from the class teacher, seniors and ask for feedback on sessions. Refer to the handbooks and understand the assessment tools for the intervention.	1 academic year	This will give me the opportunity to have leadership experience and opportunities to train other members of	

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No	Improvement and Development Goals	Success Criteria (How I will know when I have made this change)	The actions I will take to achieve the goal	Timelines	What will this help me to achieve?	Achievements (3 monthly review)
					staff in the future that will implement the intervention into their setting.	
5	Complete Early Years degree.	Take feedback and results from lecturers, improve where necessary and submit assignments by the deadline that has been set. I will be awarded a degree during a graduation ceremony.	Attend and participate in lectures, study independently at home, complete assignments by the deadlines. I will also seek support when needed and use the resources available to me.	2 years	Practice as a professional at a higher level and pursue a career that I have always wished for.	

I have created a Personal Development Plan stating the goals that I hope to achieve within the next few years, I will put an ambitious approach into my preparation and practice to ensure that I am able to fulfil my targets. To be successful I will need to focus and reflect on past experiences and use my critical thinking abilities to identify areas of improvement to be able to develop my professional practice.

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Briefing paper word count: 1000 words

What is reflection and reflective practice?

Reflective practice is looking at past experiences and focusing on how the practitioner can improve their skills moving forward, the improvement may be within their profession, personal skills or even building and sustaining relationships. According to Brock, (2015) reflective practice is an important factor within professional practice to enable development and professional training, it allows them to use their critical thinking whilst reflecting and being resilient by planning for improvement.

Appleby and Andrews, in Reed and Canning, (2012) suggest that there is a cycle that can be followed when reflecting, this includes, thinking about the experience, learning about how it could have been better and what could be improved for next time and finally reflective action, this would be implementing the improvement points into practice and developing the identified areas for development.

There is also a way of reflecting within a group of professionals, this is called Collaborative reflection, this includes the professionals having an in-depth critical conversation based on their practice. This can be useful to take advice from others.

Why is reflective practice important to Early Years practice?

The first aspect to note is reflective practice is considered to be a key to development for practitioners within the Early Years. (Birthto5matters,2021) state that being a reflective practitioner can improve the quality of care and education being provided to our children, this could make a positive impact on the children's development and boost confidence throughout the setting for both the practitioners and children. The practitioner is a role model to the children so the consistent reflective practice and development could have an overall positive impact on the children.

(Brock, 2014) suggests that Early Years practitioners should focus on the child's needs for development, expand their knowledge on what is important in the child's world leading them to develop as individuals.

According to (Paige-Smith, 2011), reflecting on practice can help practitioners to consistently develop their skills and have a better understanding on different learning experiences allowing them to be resilient and build confidence to plan and deliver their own activities to support children's development and improve from their previous practice.

The theory of reflective practice:

Schon

Schon's theory of reflective practice includes: Reflection **in** action and Reflection **on** action, these are two types of actions for the practitioner during practice and after practice.

Reflecting in action is when the practitioner is in practice and makes decisions on the spot whilst they are doing the task.

Reflecting on action is thinking about the previous practice and identifying what needs to change for next time.

(Schon, 2016) states that some practitioners get themselves into the "swampy lowlands" but they choose this to use it as a learning experience to reflect on and develop their practice through experience.

Some may agree that reflecting in action may be a challenge if the practitioner lacks in confidence, this could disadvantage their practice skills. However, reflecting on the action later can help the practitioner to identify areas of improvement enabling them to build the courage to improve.

Dewey

Dewey's reflective practice theory also focuses on two types of action: Routine action and reflective action, Routine action being unprofessional and something that may be done subconsciously every day and reflective action being professional practice in their workplace.

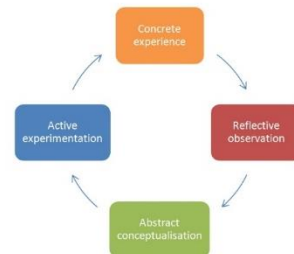
According to (Bauer, 1991) Dewey believes experience is the key part of being able to make changes for successful practice, experience is the starting point of being able to make transformation to personal practice. Many may agree with Dewey because without experience then no skills can be developed, you stay stuck with knowledge unable to reflect and pursue professional development.

(Main, 2023) discusses Dewey's theory, it tells practitioners to use both their knowledge and life experiences, to support the practitioner to develop holistically. Some may disagree and prefer to stick to prior knowledge and forcefully try and make current practice work instead of making changes for development from practical experience.

Gibbs' model



Kolb's model



Reflective Models

Following Gibbs' and Kolb's models of reflective practice, it is generally considered that Kolb's language is enhanced compared to Gibbs' basic use of language, some may find Kolb's language to be advanced so may choose to use Gibbs, however Gibbs' cycle is a longer process. On the other hand, some may prefer to venture out and develop an understanding for Kolb's shorter cycle.

Kolb's model

Kolb's model has enhanced use of language but only four steps to follow, many professionals may prefer this method due to it being less steps to follow meaning less time consuming. It is important to add McLeod, (2024) states that the cycle is only effective if all areas of the learning cycle are complete by the practitioner, it will not work if sections of the cycle are left blank. According to Howard-Morris, (2019), some learners may struggle to understand some areas of the cycle due to minimum amount of clarification, this can then cause professionals to skip sections of the cycle and as McLeod, (2024) states it is then ineffective as a learning cycle for the practitioner.

Gibbs' Model

According to UCD Teaching and Learning, (no date), Gibbs' model has basic use of language but is more comprehensive, this has six steps to follow with questions throughout the cycle to support the practitioner to identify their areas of improvement during the experience. Many may agree that having questions throughout the learning cycle is a supportive strategy to enable the practitioner to question their experience in many ways, this will support the practitioner to identify areas of improvement whilst reflecting on their practice.

Conclusion

To conclude, many would agree that reflective practice is an effective way of becoming self-aware of what could be improved within practice. There are many theories to support reflective practice and give in-depth information about how it has a positive influence on practitioners in their profession. There are a variety of reflective models to help practitioners to analyse and identify what changes need to be made to enhance their practice.

Professional Practice

To begin exploring professional practice it is important that the reader is able to understand what a professional is. Perez (2019) states, professionalism is formed by values, this helps the practitioner to use their skills and knowledge to enable them to accomplish their role. Perez (2019) also suggests that a professional is not made up of just qualifications but also being able to deliver a service that is always going above and beyond within the practitioner's responsibilities and is able to follow standards and policies within the practice. It is generally considered that a practitioner will hold skills that could enhance their profession, these may include, using their knowledge whilst practicing, having knowledge can help the practitioner to understand the relevance of their practice, effective communication and listening and an interest within their profession. Some other principles within early years practice may be following policies and acting appropriately within the workplace, this includes senior management leading by example and ensuring each practitioner has the appropriate support and training when necessary.

Having in-depth knowledge and understanding on early years practice is important to ensure all basic needs of the child are met to begin their development journey. Gov UK (2023) states that the practitioner's knowledge during a child's learning journey is important because they will be able to respond in accordance with the child's needs and have an understanding on the curriculum to support the child's development. It is important to add that having an understanding on the child's home life/background and being able to recognise signs of abuse and neglect is vital within early years practice, practitioners have a duty of care and that includes keeping the child safe from any harm. Practitioner's can prevent this from happening by working closely with agencies and passing any safeguarding concerns onto the relevant people.

Brock (2012) suggests for a professional to be able to practice within an early years environment the practitioner should have some knowledge on early years, an understanding of the child's growth and development, skills and values and some training and qualifications, these will then reflect on their practice. Brock (2012) also states that being an early years practitioner can be a rewarding role helping children to achieve their milestones and be the best that they can be.

An important factor within professional practice are skills and values, this enables the practitioner to practice appropriately and accurately. The core values are key for professional practice, these include having respect for all within the workplace and outside, fairness to avoid upset or frustrations, effective teamwork to ensure the needs of the children are always met, social awareness to make others feel heard and understood, taking their emotional needs into consideration and being able to read the room to ensure the practitioner is offering support when necessary. Powell (2010) suggests that to be an Early Years Practitioner you will need to have an interest in helping and supporting a child to develop holistically, have good communication skills to liaise with parents/carers and agencies to build positive relationships and relay any information in regards to the child and most importantly having effective communication with the child to enable understanding, learning and development. It is important to be a fun and creative practitioner to engage the child in day to day activities, but also having an understanding, helpful and nurturing approach to support the child to build a trusting relationship.

According to Johansson and Einarsdottir (2018) values are what leads the practitioner to understand whether their actions are worthwhile or whether they need to make changes to their practice.

Dunhill (2009) states that communication is a vital part of Early Years practice, it is used daily to understand each other whether that be the children, families or agencies that support the child. Communication is a wide area that includes being able to take time to listen and understand before responding. According to Orey (2014) most of our communication is non-verbal and is delivered through body language, tone and pitch, interestingly only 7 percent is delivered using words, this piece of information shows how important it is to be presenting appropriate behaviours when practicing in an early years environment and modelling to the child that they can approach any practitioner when they need support. Communication is the start of building trusting relationships, if a child and their family can communicate well with the practitioner then they will gain confidence to seek support and advice when necessary. When the child feels safe and happy within their environment they will engage and begin their development journey.

It is important to add that some children are non-verbal, this is where body language is extremely important within early years. Cross (2011) states that children that are non-verbal can display negative behaviours, this is linked to the child having difficulties to get their point across to the recipient. Some may say that non-verbal children can become frustrated if they are misunderstood or are unable to get the practitioners attention, this is another reason for practitioners to always be alert within an early years setting. Non-verbal children may also avoid contact with others due to lack of confidence and anxieties in social environments.

Following on, teamwork is vital within early years, however, McDowall Clark (2017) suggests that senior practitioners may look down on less qualified practitioners and treat them with less respect, this could cause the practitioner to lose confidence within their practice which may then affect the needs being met for the child and crucial information being missed and not passed on. On the other hand, this helps professionals to understand that to be able to deliver a practice to a high standard it is important to work efficiently as part of a team and lead by example as a senior member of staff and offer support to practitioners when it is needed. To ensure the child is safe and getting all the necessary support that is needed it is vital that practitioners work closely and liaise any vital information to the relevant multiagency teams.

For efficient practice The Welsh Government (2022) states that observations are important throughout professional practice, they support future planning, being able to identify the needs of the child and help the practitioner to understand the child better. Birthto5matters (2021) explains that observing children is a tool used to invite the practitioner to see the “bigger picture” of the child’s life, including what interests the child has and what influences the child to be engaged. Observations ensure the practitioner is providing the best care and education for the child to learn and grow, the practitioner will be able to learn so much about a child just by watching them play. Additionally, these are tools Estyn use when they visit settings, they observe the practice and the development of children and provide feedback for the setting moving forward. Estyn ensure that the quality and delivery of care and education meets the standards for early years settings.

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Finally, it is important to add that The United Nations (2015) state the purpose of the UNCRC is creating peace, friendships, rights and freedoms and to promote harmony, these are all important within a child's life. It is vital that children are aware of their human rights as they go through life, the UNCRC applies to all children under the age of 18, some may believe it should be promoted within educational settings and at home. According to Unicef (2016) four large categories within the UNCRC include, the child has the right to life, having food, shelter and medical care. The right to develop, this would be ensuring the child has all necessary support in place and having a place to learn and play. The right to be protected, this could promote a safe and trusting family and educational setting and finally the right to participate, this could be in things such as musical activities, physical exercise sessions or education. All the rights for the child will enable the child to live a healthy, happy lifestyle whilst developing overtime, it will also help the child to understand their world and what they can make of it. Professional practitioners can use the children's rights to ensure they are delivering a practice that is inclusive, and children are treated equally.

To conclude, professional practice is made up of skills and values but also knowledge and experience, there are many important aspects to ensure that the practice being delivered is consistent and relevant to meeting the child's needs. Professional practice within early years is keeping the child at centre at all times, reflecting on practice and making improvements to enhance profession and provide continuous opportunities for the child to develop.

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