

The Professional Practitioner

Personal Development Plan (PDP)

What do I know already?

During my experience as a primary school teacher assistant and an early year's university student, I have nearly completed my level 4 and I have the knowledge to carry out my role correctly and professionally while expanding my confidence, awareness and responsibility.

What have I learnt so far?

I have learnt ways in which are most beneficial for a child's development, which types of environments are constructive for their growth and that learning through play has a positive effect on the child's outcome. I have learnt how to become an enabling adult and interact with the children appropriately while adapting to the new curriculum and finally, experiencing a variety of challenges and knowing how to face them.

What do I want to develop?

I want to become a well-knowledgeable early year's practitioner by completing my level 4, 5 and 6 in university.

Objective	Actions (How will I achieve this objective/ what needs to be done?)	Resources (What support and resources are needed to achieve this objective?)	Target date for achieving this objective.	Success criteria (How will I know I have achieved this goal; how will I review this?)
Welsh Language Fluently	To achieve this objective, I will either complete online courses, or ask a lecturer/ colleague whether there are opportunities to attend Welsh classes.	Access to Government funding. Access to Welsh lessons. Support from fluent Welsh speakers. Find out if there are classes available in my area. Access to the Duolingo app.	This is a long-time goal; I want to complete this task over the next year. Roughly 01 April 2025.	I will receive a language skills certificate. I will know that I deserve this certificate because I will be proficient in the Welsh language.

First Aid Training	To achieve this objective, I will research where and when the most appropriate place and time is for me to carry out a 3-day first aid course. I will then complete this course.	Access to a local St Johns ambulance service in my area (I want to carry it out in person). Access to practical activities. Access to practice objects. Government funding.	I want to complete this course by the next school year. 01 September 2024.	I will receive a certificate that lasts three years before renewal. I will gain the correct knowledge to know what is best when aiding an accident that needs seeing too.
How to Accurately Support Autism	To achieve this objective, I will research which autism awareness course is the most effective course for me to carry out online. I will then complete this course.	Online access. Access to a wide amount of information regarding autism and how to support it. Access to communicating further with a professional.	This is a short-term goal; I would like to complete this course by the end of this month. 30 April 2024.	I will receive an online certificate. I will gain a stronger understanding of children with autism, and I will be able to effectively support this further.

Briefing paper 1000 words.

Reflection

Reflection within the early years is often best described as assisting students in gaining a greater knowledge as they transition between experiences (London Business School, 2024). There are numerous forms of reflection, which I will go into more detail about subsequently. However, Study Prism (2024) believe that when discussing reflection as a whole, many will say it is beneficial for both adult and child because it helps early childhood practitioners recognise who they are and how they connect with others, and it allows children to build on their knowledge from a wide range of experiences.

Reflective Practice

Brock (2015) implies that professionals hold reflective practice in high regard and consider it to be essential to their professional development. In numerous professions, including education, health, and social welfare, reflection is encouraged and is a crucial component of professional activity. According to Reed and Canning (2012), examples of professional activity within the early years refers to reflective thinking, learning and action. Reflective thinking must consist of an ongoing cycle of observation. It is where a practitioner will inspect their own practice by questioning whether it is altering, stimulating, developing and inspiring (Pacey, 2016). In order to be an effective reflector within practice, the practitioner must be exceptionally aware, have superior knowledge, communicate productively and work well in a team. When working in a team, this is called collaborative reflection. Durham University (No Date), says that collaborative reflection is where groups of practitioners of all skill levels collaborate to arrange, notice, and assess lessons. This type of reflection leads to a significant amount of feedback, deeper levels of reflection and positive and negative opinions.

Why Reflective Practice is Important in the Early Years

Reflective practice is important in the early years for a list of reasons. Birth to 5 matters (2021) discusses that reflective practice supports professionals to strengthen their confidence within their role, become more knowledgeable in many perspectives, develop a critical intelligence of their performance, become more proactive—that is, to take control of an action as it is happening, and ultimately, higher-quality care overall. For example, schools more often aim to become one with social progress and social importance by maintaining confident professionals within their environments (Schon, 2016). To illustrate, UNICEF (No Date) article 29, states that education must support all children to reach their full potential within everything they do while prompting and inspiring respect towards one another and respect towards all cultures and the environment, without an enabling practitioner, this may be difficult. Moreover, NCFE CACHE (No Date) points out that reflective practice may be important for the practitioner, however, it is also beneficial for the children. Strong attributes that support effective early childhood provision includes, optimizing the results for children and their families, planning effectively to provide children with play opportunities and real-life experiences to allow them to explore and analyse the world in which they live in. Providing active learning to teach the children to keep trying and not to give up when certain experiences get difficult and, finally, creating and thinking critically, this is beneficial for the child because they are gaining opportunities to produce original concepts and create connections between ideas.

The theory of reflection

John Dewey (1859—1952) – John Dewey believed that it is principle to include the child within reflection. He focused on two categories of action which were ‘Reflective action’ and ‘Routine action’. For example, Dewey represents this through his learning cycle, this 5 stage cycle results in being able to identify a solution and then

control it (Machado, 2019). He thought that encounters and relationships with the wider world enabled individuals to grow and develop. He did not completely reject traditional instruction, but rather tried to reshape learning environments to encourage active inquiry. Dewey also addressed Darwin's theory, he contended that at some stage, emotional activities contributed to an organism's ability to survive (Nickerson, 2024).

Donald Schon (1930 – 1997) - According to Yaegashi *et al* (2021), the subject matter of his theory is related to reflecting IN action and reflecting ON action, this means that when professionals evaluate their work, they create situations that help them decide wisely and enhance their own practices. UWTSD (No Date) implies that reflecting in action means reflecting while something occurs, it involves a series of, keeping the situation in mind, selecting a course of action and to act right away, an example of this could be, encouraging another culture. Reflection on action means reacting after something happens, this is where the practitioner will think again about the event and then evaluate what will need altering for the future, to illustrate, providing a safe and secure environment.

Finally, there are several reflective models created by different theorists, I have chosen to compare Gibbs and Jasper's learning cycles. The University of Edinburgh (2020) shows that, Gibbs' reflective learning cycle looks at a variety of factors, including; an explanation of what was carried out, the persons emotions during this event, an evaluation, so what was positive and negative about the experience, an analysis, meaning, what can you understand from this situation, a conclusion to allow opportunities to think about what else could of been done and finally, an action plan, if it happened again, what would be done different next time. Nevertheless, Jasper's ERA cycle involves only 3 steps, these 3 steps are, experience, action and reflection (University of Hull, 2024). To contrast, Jasper's ERA cycle is far simpler than Gibbs' learning cycle, this is clear because, by carrying out Gibbs' cycle there is opportunity for a large amount of insight and detail, whereas Jasper's ERA cycle would fail to provide much information and discussion due to lack of emotion. However, Jasper's ERA cycle may be more useful than Gibbs' cycle when there is less time, Gibbs' cycle would be a time-consuming process, while Jasper's ERA cycle is likely to be more time efficient. Although, regardless of the differences, they both provide a useful starting point, yet Gibbs' may be more complicated to follow than Jaspers'. Finally, Gibbs' reflective cycle provides a structured approach, whilst the ERA cycle can be restricting due to lack of steps. To draw a close, overall Gibbs' cycle is the most appropriate cycle to use as a professional practitioner because it inspires critical reflection, in ways that it assists in evaluating an occurrence and converting them into educational opportunities (Structural Learning, 2023).



(Source, DigitalDpoint, 2021)



(Source, BristolCBT, 2021)

To conclude, reflective practice is a necessary component of daily instruction and is crucial to working in the early years. Reflective practice requires asking oneself questions throughout the day and aids children achieve successful

outcomes. A cycle of continuous reflection, review, adaptation, and improvement characterizes exceptional practice.

Written Essay 1500 words.

8 points. 185 words each point.

Professional Practice

According to Mary (2018), professionals are immensely educated individuals who possess a distinct set of specialised knowledge that they apply responsibly for the benefit of society as a whole, in this case, for the children's holistic development. They also have the responsibility to decide how their knowledge can be constructed, and how it can be preserved. However, Gasper (2021) says that defining 'professionalism' is difficult because more practitioners within the early years are noticing the worth and significance of the traits they exhibit in the setting, regardless of their official titles. Social Care Wales (2017) implies that ongoing professional practice entails continuing learning and enhancing skills throughout one's professional life in order to inspire and foster best practices and excellent support. It involves consciously building the personal traits that are necessary to carry out obligations and professional responsibilities, recognise opportunities for learning, and, ultimately, consistently record, evaluate, and analyse on the knowledge you acquire. Overall, professionalism is commitment, respect to principles and values and an attitude that portrays correct role model characteristics (Perez, 2019).

Values are principles that direct human behavior and determine the significance of an action (Johansson and Einarsdottir, 2018). An example of an everyday value is social justice; social justice refers to equal rights within the economy, society and politics. Powell (2010) believes that values that are important for a professional practitioner in the early years are, sincere desires to promote the development of children, an optimistic personality, being able to effectively communicate and work well with both caregivers and the children, tolerance, a sense of irony, be able to work well in a team and dedicate to social inclusion and, finally, to possess a helpful, sympathetic, and perceptive character. The General Teaching Council for Scotland (2021) point out that there is a list of reasons why values are important in early years practice, these include, contributing to the formation of professional identities and attitudes as educators, they inspire and motivate to look past the topic or the classroom, they allow practitioners to further grow knowledge when working with others and families, to encourage distinctive professional dedication to each and every one of the pupils and coworkers, supports in getting to know the children holistically, including their wants and needs and finally, they allow practitioners to acknowledge the role they can play in protecting children from harm and improving their lives when appropriate. In relation to this, the EYWC (2021) and the EYA (2021) underline how crucial it is for professionals to assist a child's holistic growth in the early years, as the first five years of life are a crucial period for acquisition.

To be an effective professional practitioner, the practitioner must communicate and create relationships with a wide range of people because it enhances constructive interaction. City & Guilds (2023) believes that effective communication means being respectful in all manners by listening, showing interest, using eye contact, being patient, altering the way in which to communicate depending on the situation, being mindful and furthermore. These aspects are key because it supports the children's growth and well-being as a whole, and it is crucial to children's social, emotional, and cultural awareness and comprehension in addition to their cognitive and conceptual development (The Education Hub, 2019). Moreover, creating relationships with families and children is principle because it helps to create a bond that involves trust and equality (Department of Education, 2024). When a practitioner communicates effectively and creates special relationships, it allows them to meet the needs of all members involved because they can work together to support the children, identify if any further help is needed

and alter the environment depending on what is most beneficial for the child. According to Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs, physiological demands, which are fundamental for living, are at the base of the pyramid. A few examples of physiological needs are food, water, and shelter. Maslow maintained that before a person can satiate their higher needs, their basic requirements must be met, without communication and relationships, this may be difficult (Mcloed, 2024).

Having an in-depth knowledge is important to professional practice because a professional practitioner should be aware of how to carry out assessments, observations and plan effectively, when these three steps are carried out, it allows the practitioner to notice any concerns and demonstrates what should be put into place to meet the children's needs (Early Years Careers, 2015). To expand on this, Birth to 5 Matters (2021) says that observations and assessments also enable educators to comprehend and contribute to development, provide an enabling environment and the correct safety, play and learning opportunities that are most suited to the child and finally, to understand children's behavior. For example, Mcleod (2024) implies that Freud said that children begin to believe in themselves and become more self-assured through their experiences with the world around them. Although, understanding a child's behavior is often more difficult than it may seem because challenging behavior can sometimes be related to what is going on outside of the setting. This child may be experiencing abuse, abuse can be physical, emotional, sexual or neglect (NSPCC, No Date). In result, if there are signs of abuse, the professional practitioner will need to raise a safeguarding concern for the child's protection. Effective safeguarding and child protection require multi-agency collaboration. Safeguarding is taking provident measures that implements to ensure the safety of every child and child protection ensures that actions are carried out relating to the worry (UWTSD, No Date). UNICEF, No Date, article 19 maintains that the government is required to implement all necessary measures to make certain that children are shielded from all sorts of violence by any type of caregiver.

As mentioned previously in brief, partnership and multi-agency working is also powerful for practitioners in the early years because it guides to a greater amount of reflection. Department of Education (2024) suggests that an essential component of the early years foundation stage is collaborating with caregivers and parents. These relationships are often established and strengthened when the caregiver visits the setting; the professional will then start getting to know the caregiver and child by showing interest. An indication of professionalism would be to allow enough time and respect to learn about their customs, values, culture, language, and experiences of the family and the child. Participation demonstrates your willingness and ability to support development. These types of reflection and partnerships play a role in ensuring that the child's seven core aims are met. Government Wales (2022) tells us that these seven core aims are, starting off to an excellent start in life, having a wide range of development opportunities, supported medically and are safe from abuse, play and leisure opportunities, respected in all aspects, are secure in their environment and finally, are not in a deprived living home. However, Wilson (2016) reminds us that it often takes some time to establish a healthy relationship between practitioners, parents, and children, patience is required for this as it will result in stability and consistency, which in turn creates positive boundaries and productive at-home parenting.

Another factor that supports professional practitioners to carry out their role proficiently is the UNCRC. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is a legally enforceable global pact that outlines every child's rights, irrespective of their ability, race, or religion. It is the most extensively ratified international human rights convention in existence and the most comprehensive declaration of children's rights ever created (Save the Childre, No Date). The United Nations (2015) tells us that these principles were founded because they support order, tranquility, freewill, affinity and encourage euphony. UNICEF (2016) claim that they cover all basic life rights, from food and shelter to education and care, for example, article 1 asserts that every person under the age of eighteen has access to all of the convention's rights (UNICEF, No Date). Education Scotland (2022) maintains that it is important for young children to comprehend the idea of rights, but they must first experience it via interactions before they can

understand it verbally, this is where the UNCRC becomes supportive for practitioners. From this, practitioners can gain the knowledge on best ways to support children based on their rights; to illustrate, they can help the children develop a sense of their agency through being taught what is right and what is wrong, through the environments and creating special bonds. By providing care, significant experiences and equality to these children, they will come to terms with what they rightly deserve.

In conclusion, when carrying out the role of a professional practitioner within practice, they need to be highly knowledgeable and confident individuals who are able to support the child's holistic development through effective communication, relationship building, meeting the needs of all those involved, carrying out accurate assessments and understanding the privileges of the child.

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