Reflective Practice Briefing paper.

Introduction.

There is a process to reflective practice. Reflective practice plays a pivotal role in professional development. It enables the practitioner to analyse what has happened and, using a process like Gibbs' Reflective Model this will ensure the experience gained contributes to building on their knowledge. According to Brock (2015, p.2) reflection is the act of analysing a situation and looking deeper into the situation. To reflect is to observe from different perspectives to work out what seems right without being bias. Using their professional understanding, knowledge gained and experience it will enable the practitioner to critically evaluate the situation more effectively. Aubrey and Riley (2019, p. 182) say that Schön believed that by carrying out reflective practice and using their tacit knowledge, professional practitioners are able to develop and improve their practice. Thus, emphasising the importance of reflective practice. Tacit knowledge is knowledge that can't be learnt, it's more like intuition, it's knowledge that you've gained from experience, it can't be learnt from a book.

Reflective practice in settings.

Reflective practice is not solely used in Early Years settings. It can be used in many different fields: nursing, education, social care, hospitality. Everyone and anyone can use reflective practice to develop their skills. Aubrey and Riley (2019, p, 192) say that there are two types of reflective practice: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action refers to the process of using experiences and feelings to make decisions as things happen. This is in the present moment. Reflection-on-action is after the event has happened. The practitioner is able to reflect on what has happened and explore why it happened.

Below are two reflective models that can help a practitioner with their development. Gibb's Reflective Model 1988 is designed to help a practitioner to better reflect after an event has happened. Gibbs describes how there are 6 stages of reflection. These stages are:

Describe – this is where the practitioner would describe exactly what happened during the event.

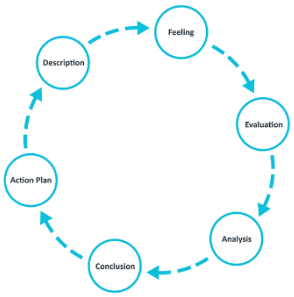
Feelings – they would then reflect on how it made them feel at the time.

Evaluate – What went well and what could have gone better? When evaluating it is important to look at both the positives and the negatives of the event.

Analyse – What else happened? What else can you make of the situation/event. Did they miss any details?

Conclude – Is there something else that they could have done? What else could they have done or said that may have bettered the outcome of the situation?

Action Plan – Plan for what they should do if it were to happen again. Knowledge gained from reflecting on this event/situation can then be used in future situations.



(Source: University of Edinburgh, 2020)

Kolb's Learning Model 1984 shares similar ideas to Gibb's Reflective Model. Kolb states that you must first have the experience, then reflect on it, notice what you have learnt from it and then carry out what you have learnt from the event.

(Source: Cambridge Assessment International Education, no date)

"For Kolb, experience is not knowledge, but only a foundation for the creation of knowledge." (Elkjaer, 2009, p. 92).

Reflective practice can be used in the Early Years Setting (EYS) to enhance the Planning cycle. Barber and Paul-Smith (2010, p, 45) describe the planning cycle as an important part of the Early Years Setting. So much so that Barber and Paul-Smith say that if the practitioner is not using the Planning Cycle in their setting, then the statutory requirements of your Early Years Settings will not and cannot be met. The Planning Cycle is based on the idea that the practitioner carries out an activity, then observes the child or children interacting with the activity and then reflects on the information gained from the observation and assesses the activity. This information is then used to plan another activity. And the cycle is repeated. For example, the practitioner will set up an activity for a child or children, they will then observe the chid or children participating in the activity, this is where they may use reflection-in-action if they notice that a certain aspect of the activity could be bettered. They will then reflect on the activity and assess what went well and what could be improved. Then they will plan for another activity using the information they have gained from the observations. This is where the practitioner will use reflection-on-action. The practitioner will look at what went well and why, and also what didn't go as well as hoped and look at why it didn't. They will then carry these ideas forward when planning the next activity. By reflecting on what went not so well and looking at why it did not go well the practitioner can adjust the next activity to better suit the child or children. The practitioner is then practicing reflective practice and developing themselves as practitioners. They are learning from their experiences.

According to Tovey (2017, p. 4) children are entitled to professionals who are well informed about idiosyncratic development and learning. For practitioners to develop their knowledge and understanding they should always aim to develop their knowledge and understanding by observation, discussion, research, reflection and training or Continuing Professional Development (CPD). By engaging in workshops the practitioner will be enhancing their skills.

When discussing the Reggio Approach Thornton and Brunton (2014, p. 106) believe that to be an effective practitioner they should draw on their learning in a way which betters their work with children in a positive, non-judgemental and sensitive way. They say that there are 6 areas in which they are expected to repeatedly improve on. This includes:

- Building and maintaining a positive relationship between the practitioner and both the adults and children.
- View each child as an individual and have an understanding of the varying needs of each child.
- To be able to extend a child's learning and development and support them in doing so.
- Develop effective communication skills that will enable them to form a positive relationship with the carers and parents of the children and the community.
- Be able to work effectively with colleagues and professionals from other agencies outside of their immediate workplace.
- Being able to meet each child's unique styles in which they learn, their needs and their interests.

Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) says that children must be treated as an individual as that practitioner should understand the varying needs of each child. This is echoed above with the Reggio Approach.

For a practitioner to further their development they also need to be in a setting which allows this. A setting that allows continuous growth and development should offer CPD to all members of staff at every level. The setting should provide a chance for practitioners to share their best practices. Thornton and Brunton (2014, p. 103) states "In Reggio it is felt that the role of the teacher is not only to teach, but also to learn." This emphasises the importance of reflective practice in Early Years Settings.

When discussing Peter Moss', Paige-Smith and Craft (2011, p, 42) state that practitioners are able to offer a higher quality experience to a child if they were to view their development in a more holistic way. Viewing care, learning and upbringing as all equally important is practiced in many European countries and also New Zealand. Which she backs up by stating that this is based on many different studies around the world.

Group Reflection.

Group reflection is just as important as practitioner or individual reflection according to Hallett (2013, p. 42). An example of group reflection is a staffroom. The practitioners need to be able to feel that they can share and are able to trust the other members of the group. This enables group reflection. Doing so in an informal setting such as a staffroom provides a more relaxed area, and the practitioners are more likely to open up and share ideas, thoughts and experiences. Sharing ideas between practitioners is a great way to develop relationships with colleagues. By hearing that another practitioner has been in a similar situation or felt the same way it makes them more relatable.

An article written by Boerboom *et al* compared the results of a study to find out if group refection helped practitioners broaden their critical reflection and more objective plans on how to change (2011, p. 620).

According to Moon (1999, p. 116) there are 5 stages of learning. They progress from surface learning to deep learning. Deep learning is reflective learning and something all practitioners should strive for. The five stages are: noticing, making sense, making meaning, working with meaning and the final stage is transformative learning. The first three stages are non-reflective, by the time the practitioner has reached the fourth stage (working with meaning) then they are said to be engaging with reflective practice. It is then proceeded with transformative learning which is where the practitioner reflects on what they have done and using the new information gained, after reflecting, they are able to make changes to their practices, thus improving their skills and development and benefitting the child's experiences and development.

Reflective accounts and journaling.

Some practitioners are asked to complete a Reflective Accounts form in particular after participating in a CPD course. Questions such as What was the nature of the event or experience that you had? What did you learn from the experience or event? How did you use this experience to improve your practice? And how was this relevant to the Code? This is a chance for the practitioner to reflect and make sense of the event or experience. There are other ways that can be used to reflect on, such as journal writing. According to Wäschle *et al* (2015, p, 300) journal writing is particularly beneficial for young learners. They believe that journal writing may also increase the practitioner's enthusiasm and critical thinking. They state that journal writing can also utilize student and practitioner's metacognitive and cognitive planning. Metacognition is the process of thinking about thinking and analysing your thought process.

Conclusion.

To conclude, it is widely known that reflective practice is a form of developing skills, and this contributes to professional development. Reflective practice and learning can be used in many different fields. Most theorists agree that reflective practice benefits the practitioner and therefore, if practiced regularly and efficiently, it also benefits the child. Practitioners are able to use theorists' models, for example Gibbs model, to enhance their reflective skills. Studies have proven that reflective practice is enhancing the practitioners' skills, knowledge and understanding and contributing towards children receiving a better standard of care and education. Using reflective account forms and reflective journal writing enables a practitioner to reflect more easily. As reflective journal writing is done regularly in enhances the practitioners reflective learning skills and critical reflection skills.

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