

Reflection Briefing paper.**Introduction**

Reflection is about analysis, about delving into an issue or problem to explore different perspectives from a range of aspects and standpoints (Brock 2015) being able to learn from past experiences is very important, using reflective practice and continually improving, practitioners can gain better outcomes. What would professionals do differently on a daily basis after observing and listening to children and peers, learning from day to day or week to week experiences, in early years surroundings professionals can aim to change or evolve their practice and continue to learn. PACEY (professional association for childcare and early years practice 2016) agree stating Reflective practice is the process of thinking about and analysing your practice, with the aim of challenging, changing, modifying, developing, and improving it. This should be a continuous cycle of reflection and improvement. university of Cambridge 2021 agrees.

Who should reflect?

Anybody working in teaching or social care can benefit from reflection. People in these professions can learn from past experiences with children and their families. Learning from experience will show what lessons to take away, to improve a child's learning or family situations. (University of Cambridge 2021)

How can reflection be useful?

Reflection can be useful in positive or negative situations, reflecting on positive experiences can be motivating and encouraging. It can be used as an advantage in education and careers, by analysing the things that were done well and planning for similar or better outcomes.

Reflecting on negative experiences is sometimes easier as deep analysis and evaluation can aid in getting better outcomes. In employment or higher education, individuals are responsible for ongoing learning and development. Reflective learning and thinking can be a challenge as it is not known where it could lead. (Cottrell 2019) The UK Government's Department of Education agrees and states that teachers need to keep their knowledge and skills up to date and be self critical. They need to respond to feedback from peers and colleagues, understand how classrooms learn and how these impacts on teaching, have an excellent knowledge of the curriculum and subjects and how to assess it. The areas for learning in early years in Wales are Personal and social development, well-being and cultural diversity, Language, literacy and communication skills, Mathematical development, Welsh language development, Knowledge and understanding of the world, Physical development, Creative development.(Early years Wales 2015) For children to be taught correctly and with the best of their knowledge , practitioners must be able to show that the professional development has been obtained and that growth within the curriculum has been followed.

What theories support the usefulness of reflection?

Kolb's theory supports the usefulness of reflection with his four stage cycle. Concrete experience > Reflective observation > Abstract conceptualisation > Active experimentation. When a practitioner makes the way through the four stages of this cycle, effective learning can be seen.

What is a reflective model and how does it support learning? Is there more than one model?

A reflective model is a focused process that is used often by professionals in order to guide personal development. Reflective models aim to help individuals become aware of their own knowledge, past experiences and beliefs (university of Nottingham, n.d.) Dewey believed that reflection could aid making sense of events that were hard to describe or clarify. Reflective learning should be recalling events and questioning ways to explore why there were certain outcomes and what actions could give better outcomes. (infed.org 2013)

There are six stages to Gibbs' reflective cycle, Kolb's experiential learning cycle has four stages and Driscoll's WHAT model has three stages.

Pick a model and explain it.

The Gibbs reflective cycle shows the cycle of reflective practice, Description, what happened. > Feelings, what were you thinking or feeling > Explanation, what was good and bad about the experience. > Analysis, what sense can you make of the situation. > Conclusion, what else could you have done. > Action plan, if it arose again, what could you do. then back to Description. Progressing through the stages helps to understand and plan for future situations where the outcomes would be different. The six stages of Gibbs' reflective cycle takes apart and makes you analyse the situation or experience so that the outcome has been changed through learning. The first stage is feelings, how you felt at the time, for example sad, angry, frustrated that things had not gone to plan. Next is the explanation, what did you find helpful or unhelpful annoying or agreeable. Then there is Analysis, what can you make of the information you have received, can you stop the situation getting worse if necessary. Conclusion, could you have approached the situation in a better frame of mind, been more trusting, alert or ready for any problems that might arise. Action plan, what can you take from the situation or experience to make it better next time, planning around the information that you have is important as it will help you decide what techniques or actions to implement to make the outcome better for the situation or the child.

How can reflection be introduced into Early Years settings

When looking after or teaching early years it is important to introduce reflection as part of the professional practice. Teachers can use reflection in every aspect of the day. Challenging themselves and the children in ongoing

learning. When a school day does not go as planned, the Gibbs reflective cycle can be put to use. Implementing professional reflection within early years settings can provide practitioners with the tools to improve their practice. By reflecting on practice, practitioners can identify any given child's potential stumbling blocks in learning and can help that child to overcome challenges. Reflection can also help to foster problem solving abilities. By questioning methodology practitioners can become more flexible with regards to delivering their practice which will help children and their learning. (Early years alliance 2016)

What is Group Reflection – how is it useful?

Group reflection is having a reflecting conversation with peers or colleagues. Group reflection is seen as being of high value as others might ask more challenging questions or questions that have not yet been considered, therefore delving deeper into reflective thinking. (University of Edinburgh 2018) Parents and carers will feel more involved and valued if asked for their views and opinions. When parents or carers are asked for information in a formal or informal way, verbally or presenting written feedback as part of a group reflection, is classed as helpful for the whole family. (University of Cambridge 2021)

Reflection workshops.

According to Oxford English Dictionary (2012) the definition of the word workshop is, a meeting for discussion and activity on a particular subject or project. By attending reflection workshops, it could be made clear to practitioners If there are any areas within their early years education setting or the professional practitioner themselves that need improvement, reflection workshops can help identify and improve them, for example, through workshops like, reflection workshops or team building. Individuals or groups can reflect on each other's work practice, and professional behaviour, and find the areas that are looking for improvements. In the workshops for particular subjects or areas of learning, practitioners who are working or learning together with peers or colleagues may offer different views and opinions that everybody can learn from. In some cases practitioners may not know that there are areas to be improved on, workshops can identify this and put into place a plan of action to better the practice or professional behaviour of others or themselves.

Reflective Account Forms. What are they and why are they necessary?

Reflective account forms are an aid in the teaching workforce, it is an informal document that can be used for profession development and filled in at the end of each day or week or situation. Feedback from children can help you fill in the form. Did my lesson go well? Did my class learn enough? How can I change things to make my day go better? Or My lesson went well, my class had a good learning day, I can use my last report to plan out my lesson today, as it went well yesterday.

Conclusion.

We have looked at some of the many areas that reflective practice has, it is an excellent skill to have or learn. Many professionals have shared their beliefs and findings and many professionals have found it very effective, making their working day more manageable and easier to plan, through the models of Gibbs and Kolb practitioners have evolved over the years and made teaching and education all about working from experience, and how to make sense of the troublesome situations if they arise again.

Summarise your findings.

Within the early years workforce, reflection is very important. It will aid in providing the best outcome for the child's education and well-being and if done right, the whole family. Group reflection can be with practitioners, social workers and families, all wanting the best for the child. Talking through any problems these professionals can come to the best outcome for family. Reflection is also an important tool for a practitioner to have as it will help with the ongoing learning and personal growth that comes with it. If a practitioner finds the class is lacking in motivation and enthusiasm, they can pull on previous experiences or learn from the situation. Planning classes and outdoor activities can also be reflected on for example, what happened when it rained on an outdoor activity, did everybody have a coat? Learning from this, the next time there is an outdoor activity maybe ask if everyone has a coat before you leave the building.

Discuss outcomes of reflection and how it helps Professional Development.

Using reflection in professional development will make the practitioner a better professional. Practitioners can learn from the reflective practice in a way that helps them in both professional and personal behaviours. It is important to be constantly learning about things you thought you already knew. New ideas and thoughts from colleagues or peers by reflecting on each other's practices, helps to find the best way to do things or the best order for them to be done. Feedback or advice from other professionals who have used reflective practices or reflective learning is also important as this can aid in professional development. Professional and personal development will grow when the views or opinions of others are taken into consideration, being able to except the views, opinions and ideas of others is a big part of development, not agreeing or not liking other views, need reflective listening and shows the need for reflective thinking. Professional development helps to improve the professional practice areas and therefore helps to improve on children's education and helps to improve the outcomes of the children. UK Government (2016)

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