

Cover Sheet

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Assignment title and number: The Professional Practitioner ECGE4009

AI Cover sheet

Component 1: PDP – Word count 492

Component 2: Briefing Paper – Word count 1094

Component 3: Essay with cover sheet – Word count 1645

Reference List

AI Statement –

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

I have previously attended a comprehensive 3-day training on The SCERTS Model. SCERTS is an intervention for children and people with autism. SCERTS refers to Social Communication, Emotional Regulation and Transactional Support. I have previously attended the Curiosity Approach Programme with Gina Davies. This is a precursor to Attention Autism; both are now sourced through Attention Autism Limited. I currently support early years settings in using the Curiosity Programme. I would like to develop this further and embed the SCERTS model into my practice. I will do this by offering intensive play sessions to settings, known as Play to Learn, who have a child with an identified additional learning need and who are receiving additional learning provision through an Individual Development Plan - IDP. Following the intense play sessions, staff will receive a SCERTS profile, this will be shared with the early years setting and the child's chosen nursery in preparation for the child's transition. By doing this the nursery will be well informed on how best to meet and support the child's needs.				
Objective	Actions	Resources	Target Date	Success criteria
To further develop the role of SCERTS and the Curiosity Programme in early years settings.	- Develop a SCERTS profile for those children receiving Play to Learn through their Individual Development Plan. - Develop a lending library that early year's settings can access to support them in implementing the SCERTS and the Curiosity Programme. - Develop a range of advice sheets in relation to the SCERTS emotional regulation and transactional support. - Develop advice sheets in relation to the Curiosity Approach Programme. - All advice sheets will be bilingual.	https://view.officeapps.live.com/OP/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fscerts.com%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2Fscerts_in_production_june_2010.ppt&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK https://scerts.com/wp-content/uploads/SCERTS_2pg_316.pdf https://research-ebSCO-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/c/onvpsy/viewer/pdf/jmenlbwgy5?route=details https://attentionautism.co.uk/cu/riousty-programme/	- SCERTS profile proforma - December 2024 - Lending Library – November 2024 - SCERTS advice sheets – ongoing - Curiosity Approach advice sheets – ongoing.	- All children in receipt of Play to Learn through their IDP will receive a SCERTS Profile. - Settings will have access to the Lending Library and a wide range of bilingual advice sheets that adhere to the SCERTS Model and Curiosity Approach Programme.
To provide guidance, support and advice to	To develop training support for EY settings on meeting the sensory needs of children in the early years.	https://juliadyer.com/courses-posts/sensory-processing-autism/	- Attend Julia Dyer's Training – December 2024 - Training module – February 2025	Settings will have access to a training module and to a range of resources in

childcare settings on sensory integration and regulation.	To develop and source a range of resources and information for childcare settings around creating sensory rooms/ spaces.	https://viewer-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/EbscoViewerService/ebook?an=2959117&callbackUrl=https%3a%2f%2fresearch.ebsco.com&db=nlebk&format=EB&proflid=ehost&lpid=&ppid=&lang=en&location=https%3a%2f%2fresearch-ebSCO-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk%2f%2fonvpsy%2fsearch%2fdetails%2f6qzbbbahqn%3fdb%3dnlebk&isPLink=False&requestContext=&profileIdentifier=onvpsy&recordId=6qzbbbahqn Dunn, W. (2008) <i>Living sensorially: Understanding your senses</i> . London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers Voss, A. (2015) <i>Understanding Your Child's Sensory Signals</i> 3rd edn. Great Britain: Amazon	Range of resources - ongoing	relation to meeting the sensory needs of children in the early years.
Makaton	Attend CPD training and update Makaton License	https://makaton.org/	- CPD Training - Birmingham 25.03.24 - License renewal - June 2025	Licensed to continue to practice as a licensed Makaton Tutor

BRIEFING PAPER – Reflective Practice

What is Reflective Practice Is?

Reflective practice is deemed to be part of the core values of professionals particularly of those within education, health and social care.

Professionals would think about how they had engaged with their clients during sessions and look at what had worked well and not so well and what could be learned from sessions for next time. (University of Cambridge, *nd* and Brock, 2015)

Although the University of Cambridge (*nd*) offers Schon's definition for reflective practice they go further to suggest that this is not an isolated process but is in fact part of a much larger and more personal process and that people will look at it differently depending on their own cultural and personal circumstance.

Reflective practice

Reflective practice is the ability to reflect on one's actions so as to engage in a process of continuous learning.

- Donald Schon

Diagram 1:
Reflective Practice
(University of Cambridge, *nd*)

Lindon and Trodd (2016) and Pacey (2016) believe that reflective practice needs serious thought and consideration of current practice including critical thinking, challenging and modifying practice. This leads practitioners to more informed decisions about strengths and areas of learning. However Lindon and Trodd also recognise that this can be challenging when faced with practitioners who may resort to the quickest or easiest option rather than how the children may experience the event itself.

Why Reflective Practice?

The necessity to improve practice in the early years is embedded in the Rights of the Child (Children in Wales 2021), this specifically states that skilled practitioners should be able to meet a child's needs using observation and reflective practice. Firstly practitioners must understand what reflective practice is and how it can be done successfully to improve not only their own knowledge and understanding but also to have better outcomes for the child. Social Care Wales (2017) further

suggests that fostering an environment that offers time for reflective practice and ensuring its part of the routine will create a shift in practice and behaviours which in turn offer a change in results.

It can also redefine challenges as learning opportunities and ensure that practitioners be aware of and understand a child's personal circumstances and cultural background. This will benefit practice and teachings allowing practitioners to personalise their planning and activities for learning. (Education Wales, 2022 and Hildabrand *et al.*, 2024)

Campbell- Barr and Leeson (2019, pg., 105) agree and further suggests that when using reflective practice it enables any practitioner to hone their skills and progress further to become an attentive and imaginative professional.

Amini Virmani *et al* (2020, pg., 1052-1070) also found that early childhood practitioners who were using reflective practice believed that it had had a direct impact on the children's developmental outcomes and social and emotional development.

However if reflective practice is not taught in a robust and systematic way it can often be seen to be superficial and can often lack clarity. Early years practitioners need training and support from a mentor or professional supervisor to be able to carry out purposeful and meaningful reflective practice. In conjunction work places need to model reflective practice and ensure regular times for shared collaboration offering a place to check in with colleagues. Doing this can create a supportive environment and can further support with new ideas for practice and shared ownership of responsibility and success (Brock, 2015 and Social Care Wales 2017).

The Theory

Reflective theory and practice have been written about extensively. Leading this was Dewey who's main ideas and principles centred on child centred learning using what we know and understand about the child to support our practice and the child's learning. Dewey is often considered as one of the founding leaders of reflective practice however current understanding of the concept suggests that the more modern foundations are with Schon (Ryder and Downs 2022).

BRIEFING PAPER – Reflective Practice

Schon examined both reflection in action and reflection on action. Reflection in action looked at how experienced practitioners responded in real

time, using their knowledge and understanding to be able to feel their way through an activity or event as opposed to reflection on action where a practitioner would reflect after the event has occurred. Reflection on action can also happen in discussion with another colleague or within supervision. Wilson, T (2016, pg., 33)

Brookfield (2017) adds that reflective practice happens when we build it into everyday teachings ensuring it becomes habit aiding practitioners to make more informed decisions about how to support children and ensure that what we are actually teaching has an effect.

Analysis of modules

The Schon Reflective Model

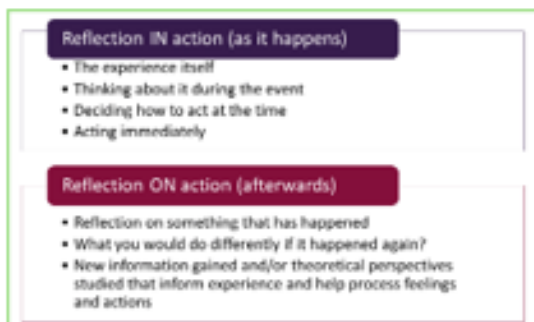


Diagram 2: Reflective Writing: Schon (University of Hull, 2024)

Schon's work has played a critical role in raising awareness of reflective practice and has highlighted that practitioners should be using it to be better at what they do. By using reflective practice Schon believes that practitioners will be able to apply what they have already learnt to future experiences. However Ryder and Downs (2022) suggest that Greenwood (1993) offers the idea that reflection-before-action also needs to be considered and is quite often forgotten about.

Campbell-Barr and Leeson (2019, pg., 110-111) state that Schon goes further to encourage practitioners to consider their own assumptions and prejudice which may go unnoticed and calls this technical rationality. Without this practitioners may in fact offer poor and in some cases even dangerous practice.

Kleinheksel, A. J *et al* (2023) claim that Schon's reflection on action is one of the most used models by the more novice practitioner while reflection in action is carried out by the more experienced practitioner.

Ryder and Downs (2022) recognise that Schons work is an essential precursor to Kolbs s Experiential Learning Cycle.

Kolb's Cycle of Reflective Practice



Diagram 3: Reflective Writing: Kolb (University of Hull, 2024)

Kolbs model is based on how people learn and focuses on learning through actual experience. It has four areas and offers what appears to be a more structured approach to reflection. It offers a continuous cycle where you work on one stage at a time. This then leads you to new ideas and experiences. In agreement with Schon it begins with an event or an experience either new or old. (University of Cambridge, *et al* and University of Hull, 2024)

Ryder and Downs (2022) recognise that Kolbs Experiential Learning model is one of the most significant and most used models to date. However they also argue that it can be deemed too simplistic in its design to meet the demands of the changes within the modern world.

Summary

Reflective practice is essential in the early years. Not only due to it being enshrined in law but by also encouraging critical evaluation of skills which lead to knowledgeable, thoughtful, imaginative and attentive professionals .

Cover Sheet for Essay

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Content: Essay - Recognise and analyse the significance of different aspects of professional practice and why these are important in meeting the individual and inclusive needs of children.

Let us begin by considering what a professional actually is. Working as a professional can cause opposing ideas with the general opinion of a professional referring to someone who is skilled and knowledgeable and who has a formal qualification. Gasper (2015, pp. 254-268) and Stacey (2009) agree that it can be challenging. However, they also agree that in the early years it is essential that experience and individual qualities must also be considered.

Working with children often includes many different roles and responsibilities which makes it quite difficult to determine what a childcare professional is. The care aspect of looking after young children is often what can be seen to be misleading to the idea of professionalism. However, care is at the core of early years provision as without it practitioners would not be able to provide safe, compassionate, joyful and encouraging environments (Education Wales, 2022).

Early Education (2011) quite succinctly state “Early childhood professional: A person who works professionally with or on behalf of children and families in early childhood environments.”

The early years workforce often attracts a wide variety of people from numerous backgrounds with a range of different qualifications. Having a diverse workforce offers opportunities for new ways of working and the consideration of other people's points of views, cultures and experiences. It encourages collaboration and extending knowledge and understanding (Gasper, 2015 and Siencyn, 2015, pp. 205-216). Furthermore, practitioners must have a genuine liking and interest in children and their development and be flexible in their approach continually asking themselves what they can see, hear or feel (Powell, 2010).

It is fundamental for practitioners to understand their own strengths and weaknesses all the while being open to developing personal knowledge and skills as well as that of the team as a whole. Using reflective practice will foster a whole team approach which underpins professional practice in the early years. However, practitioners and workplaces must recognise that this can only happen when there is an open dialogue in a supportive and safe environment without traditional hierarchy (Gasper, 2015, pp. 254-268 and Siencyn, 2015, pp. 205-216).

However, one should not forget that with current challenges facing the childcare workforce and with greater demands on practitioners, time frames and funding some have lost confidence in their abilities and what they can offer. Practitioners can have differing ideas about the way they work, new practitioners coming into the workforce may have a different view to those that have worked there for years. Constructive methods such as reflective practice will help and support differences of opinions and will encourage practitioners to move forward together. Resolving differing views and opinions can often help practitioners to develop emotional intelligence and create emotionally safe environments for not only themselves but also the children (Education Wales, 2022, Stacey, 2009 and Early Education, 2011).

The Rights of the Child (Children in Wales, 2021) recognise that an essential part of a practitioner's role is to develop a mutually positive and respectful relationship with the child and their family and caregivers. Creating links to the child's family, home and culture offer more positive relationships between the child the practitioners and their families (Gasper 2015, pp. 254-268, Stacey, 2009 and Education Wales, 2022).

Working with families and caregivers can be quite a skill and needs effective open communication and often courage as some conversations can be quite sensitive particularly when considering safeguarding or any emerging needs the child or family may have. Working in partnership with families and caregivers and offering an open-door policy encourages feelings of them being worked with rather than having things done for them or to them (Gasper, 2010, WJEC, 2023 and Education Wales, 2022).

When working with parents' practitioners need not only consider their relationships with families and caregivers but also how they share information. All avenues of communication including face to face, letters, emails, photos, translation services and more must be explored when meeting the best needs for the child and their family. Open, nonjudgmental and honest discussions are considered to be best practice with the child's needs at the center. This will ensure that all families no matter their socio-economic backgrounds, culture or heritage have access to shared information in the safest most confidential way possible (Gasper, 2010 and Early Education, 2011).

As well as developing relationships with families' practitioners must also develop effective relationships with colleagues. Modelling kind, supportive and respectful relationships with colleagues and children is paramount for engaging their wider family. Practitioners need to recognise that they cannot work in isolation and must work as a wider team to support one another and the children in their care (Education Wales, 2022 and Stacey, 2009). Campbell-Barr and Lesson (2019, page., 36-44) state further that parents rely on their emotions when considering the quality of their childcare and look for settings that are warm and nurturing. Therefore, it is essential to develop positive relationships within settings as well as with families.

Effective communication does not end with those in the setting, practitioners also need to consider how they communicate with other agencies. Being able to collaborate with a range of professionals is essential to the role of practitioners particularly when meeting the needs of children or when seeking further advice to improve their development, health and wellbeing and for any safeguarding concerns (Welsh Government, 2023, Education Wales, 2022 and Stacey, 2009). However, Gasper (2010, pg., 70-71) references Colmer (2008) who found that although communication within the same setting may be effective it can often not be the case when sharing information across disciplines. This further suggests that when meeting the needs of children multi-agency collaboration is key.

Welsh Government (2023) and Education Wales (2022) dictate that practitioners will offer high quality provision and will consistently reflect on and improve their practice. Furthermore, that practitioners need to have a broad and balanced knowledge base of early childhood development and must understand their own role in nurturing a child's curiosity and learning and that practitioners must be able to recognise that the skills needed for lifelong learning begin in the early years. Understanding the five developmental pathways will enable practitioners to offer a holistic approach to the child's own unique ways of learning.

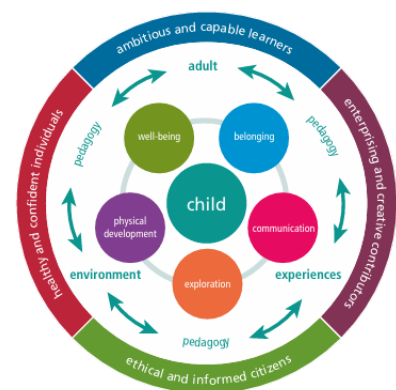


Diagram 1: The Five Developmental Pathways (Education Wales, 2022, pp. 25, dia.).

One of the foremost areas of a practitioner's knowledge must be that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and not just that of management. This is underpinned by article 37 in the United Nation Convention Rights of the Child, UNCRC. All practitioners must be aware of their safeguarding policy which, in Wales, must adhere to the Welsh Government's Safeguarding Procedures. In addition, they must not just be aware of their safeguarding policy but must attend regular training and be able to put it into practice and adhere to any other lawful procedures (Welsh Government, 2023 and Early Education, 2011, Children's Commissioner Wales).

An equally important aspect is observation. Children need skilled, observant practitioners. By carefully observing the child's responses to an external stimuli or event, practitioners can identify the child's needs, thoughts and feelings. When using this information planning cycles can be implemented to ensure the child is thriving at their own pace and is engaging in effective and authentic experiences. Observations must be purposeful and recorded effectively, looking at what the child can do. It offers practitioners a greater understanding of the child's development and how the child learns best (Education Wales, 2022, Gasper, 2010 and Brodie and Savage, 2015).

However, practitioners must remain unbiased and consider whether the child being observed is aware and that they may change or modify their behaviours as a result. Using a range of observations in a range of different situations will ensure a more in-depth understanding and help them to inform practice and planning. (Merret, 2006 and Gasper, 2010)

Every child has the right to grow up happy, healthy and safe. This is enshrined within the UNCRC and in 2011 Wales became the first country in the UK to protect these rights and embed them within law. Everyone including practitioners must be aware of these rights (Welsh Government, 2023). They are embedded within early years practice from having access to a range of educational experiences, listening to children and keeping them safe to having their culture and heritage being recognised (Siencyn, 2015, pp. 205-216 and Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2024).

Siencyn. S (2015, pp. 205-216) states that although a small country, Wales, leads with a dominant voice in the landscape of children's rights and embedding them into policy and practice has taken a revolutionary approach to children's early years and learning.

Wales has summarised the UNCRC into seven core aims and a number of national initiatives have followed citing these as their basis. Siencyn. S (2015, pg., 206) takes this further stating that Wales has been more receptive to children's understanding and development and its role within the UNCRC than other countries in the UK.

However, as previously stated, practitioners can come from many diverse backgrounds and may have their own limitations in their knowledge and understanding. Funding may also be unavailable for staff to attend training. It is therefore essential that with qualitative supervision and robust professional development in place that practitioners have access to training (Welsh Government, 2023 and Early Education, 2011).

Early Education (2011, np) also state that practitioners will "Keep updated with research, theory, content knowledge, high-quality early childhood practices and understanding of children and families."

In summary, professional practice is not an isolated factor but a range of ethics, values and practices and in the early years is also included in the UNCRC and law. It is neither linear nor static and must be seen as continually evolving. Practitioners must be supportive and supported to be able to meet the needs of the children in their care. This will only add to the rich, diverse and qualitative practice already offered in Wales.

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