

Module: ECEY4009

Student Number: 2508338

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Components undertaken for module ECEY4009

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Component 1: Reflective personal development plan

Component 2: Briefing paper on the Importance of Reflective Practise within EY

Component 3: Written Essay

AI Statement

I confirm that I have not used AI generated text or information for any part of this Module assignment following the Module Artificial Intelligence Guidance provided by UWTSD.

Part 1 – Continued Professional Development

What do I know already / Beth ydw i'n ei wybod eisoes:

- Strong understanding of child development principles and early years frameworks in Wales.
- Experience in designing and coordinating training for Early Years Settings and childminders based on current needs of the sector.
- Practical knowledge of outdoor learning environments and the benefits of children learning and playing in the natural environment.
- Familiarity with quality assurance processes within local authority settings.
- How outdoor learning and Froebelian principles intertwine and compliment each other sharing consistent messages

What have I learnt so far / Beth ydw i wedi'i ddysgu hyd yn hyn:

- Developed skills in cascading information to the relevant people, professional engagement, planning support strategies
- Improved understanding of health and safety legislation, positive risk taking, risk benefit assessments and first aid requirements for children's learning in the outdoor environment.
- How to plan and deliver outdoor learning sessions that promote sustainability and wellbeing and inspiring future environmental stewards

What do I want to develop / Beth ydw i eisiau ei ddatblygu:

- Complete BA (Hons) in Early Years Education and Care to deepen theoretical knowledge and enhance professional practice
- Undertake Froebel training to enhance play-based and child-led learning approaches.
- Achieve Forest School Leader qualification to confidently lead outdoor education programs.
- Strengthen strategic planning and evaluation skills for quality improvement across childcare services.

Objective / Gwrthrychol	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 objective Dyddiad Targed ar gyfer cyflawni amcan	Success criteria (How will I know I have achieved this goal, how will I review this?)
	Camau gweithredu (Sut byddaf yn cyflawni'r amcan hwn/beth sydd angen ei wneud?)	Adnoddau (Pa gefnogaeth ac adnoddau sydd eu hangen i gyflawni'r amcan hwn?)		Meini prawf llwyddiant (Sut byddaf yn gwybod fy mod wedi cyflawni'r nod hwn, sut byddaf yn adolygu hyn?)

Part 1 – Continued Professional Development

To undertake and successfully complete my BA HONS in Early Years Education and Care with University of Wales Trinity St David	- Put a case forward to secure funding from my employer in time for enrolment. - Gather all course details and demonstrate how the degree will benefit my role as Quality Assurance Officer for Blaenau Gwent. - Ensure possession of updated Disclosure and Barring Check, valid ID, and qualifications required for enrolment	- Employer support and funding approval. - Course prospectus and enrolment requirements. - Access to HR for DBS check and documentation.	July 2027	- Successful graduation from the BA HONS program. - Improved professional capacity and recognition in my role of Quality Assurance Officer.
To undertake the full Froebel network training	- Identify and enrol in Froebel training modules. - Attend all sessions and complete required assignments. - Engage with Froebel principles and apply them in practice.	- Access to Froebel training network. - Time allocation for training and reflection. - Support from line manager and Froebel training coordinator. (Froebel Trust, 2025)	September 26	- Completion of all Froebel training modules. - Demonstrated application of Froebel principles in early years practice. - Cascade Froebelian principles to BG Early years settings through contact visits and training program
To successfully complete my Forest School leader qualification	- Complete the final two modules on safety and sustainability. - Evaluate observed sessions and compile final portfolio. - Follow Cambium Forest School guidance for portfolio submission. - Use gathered evidence from practical training and sessions to validate outcomes	- Cambium Forest School guidance documentation. - Access to training records and session observations. - Mentor or supervisor support for portfolio review. (Cambium Training, n.d.)	November 1 st 2026	- Awarded Forest School Leader status within 12 weeks of portfolio submission. - Recognition of leadership and sustainability practices in forest school settings - Implement into Byd Natur outdoor learning training for 2026 EYCP training program

What is reflection and reflective practice?

Reflection is the process of reviewing and analysing experiences to make improvements to future practice.

Reflective practice is how we consider what we do, how we do it, and how it affects those we work with.

According to Schon 'Reflective practice involves applying this process systematically to professional work, enabling practitioners to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for development' (Schon, 1983).

'Being reflective helps us to become more aware of what we do and why we do it... Reflective practice can help us to recognise key strengths that we provide and areas that we can improve' (Welsh Government, 2023a, p. 6).

Why is reflective practice important to EY practice?

Reflective practice is a vital component of high-quality early years provision and plays an essential role in early years practice. It supports continuous improvement, professional development, and better outcomes for children. Welsh Governments newly published Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care: Reflective Practice Toolkit states that 'Being reflective helps us to become more aware of what we do and why we do it... Reflective practice must be an ongoing process that should be purposeful' (Welsh Government, 2023, p. 6).

By considering the questions posed to practitioners within the toolkit such as

- What do we know and want to know?
- How do our actions impact practice?
- How can we be better?

we can identify what works, what may need to change and how we can make this happen ensuring positive outcomes for children is at the centre of what we do.

The theory of reflective practice

John Dewey was one of the first educational theorists to describe reflection as a critical part of learning. He believed that reflection is not just about casually thinking things over, it's a purposeful and active process where we really dig into our experiences, figure out what happened and why, and use that understanding to make better choices next time.

'Reflection is the active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends.' (Dewey, 1933).

Donald Schon introduced two key types of reflection that help professionals learn from their experiences. The first is Reflection in Action, which is about thinking and making changes while you are in the moment. The second is Reflection on Action, which happens afterwards, when you look back and reflect on what went well, what did not, and what you might do differently next time.

Schon believed that this kind of thoughtful reflection helps professionals grow because it turns everyday experiences into learning opportunities. He described it as a way of 'knowing-in-practice' where even the decisions we make on the spot can be unpacked and understood to improve future work (Schon, 1983).

'Professionals engage in a form of knowing-in-practice... reflection-in action can be articulated and analysed to reveal the intellectual rigor underlying professional work.' (Schön, 1983).

Gibbs' model

Gibbs Model of Reflection (1988) proposed a six-stage cycle of reflection:

1. Description - What happened
2. Feelings- How were you feeling
3. Evaluation - What was good / bad
4. Analysis - What sense do you make of it
5. Conclusion -What else could you have done
6. Action Plan- What would you do again?

'Gibbs' model acknowledges that your personal feelings influence the situation and how you have begun to reflect on it.' (Open University, 2023)



Image source - TSW Training (no date)

Driscoll's model

Driscoll's Model of Reflection (1994) is a simpler three question framework based on Borton's developmental model:

1. What? – Describing the experience.
2. So what? – Understanding the significance.
3. Now what? – Planning future actions.
- 4.

'Driscoll's model offers a straightforward framework for reflection, making it highly accessible and useful in fast-paced environments.'

*(This vs That, 2025)



Image source - University of Cambridge (no date)

Analysis of models – compare/contrast/pros/cons:

Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988) and Driscoll's Model of Reflection (1994) are both popular models that support reflective practice. They both show similarities in that they encourage practitioners to learn from experience, they differ significantly in structure, depth, and application.

Gibbs' model provides a six-stage process which guides users through a comprehensive reflection. It is particularly effective in encouraging emotional awareness and detailed analysis of events. As noted by the Open University (2023), Gibbs' model 'acknowledges that your personal feelings influence the situation and how you have begun to reflect on it, making it suitable for emotionally led situations'.

In contrast, Driscoll's model is based on three simple questions. This approach is simple and accessible. According to Thinking Feeling Being (2025),

Driscoll's model is 'highly accessible and useful in fast-paced environments,' making it a good model to be used in reflections or time constrained settings. However, each model has limitations. 'Gibbs' cycle can be too rigid or repetitive, potentially leading to superficial reflection if not used thoughtfully' (Open University, 2023). 'Driscoll's model, while easy to apply, may lack the depth required for complex or emotionally charged experiences unless the user expands on each question meaningfully' (Thinking Feeling Being, 2025).

In summary, Gibbs' model is best suited for in-depth, structured reflection, especially in training and supervision, while Driscoll's model is more appropriate for brief, focused reflection. The choice between models should depend on the context, time available, and the depth of reflection required.

Conclusion

'Reflective practice is essential in Early Years, supporting continuous improvement and better outcomes for children' (Welsh Government, 2023). It involves actively analysing experiences helping us to identify strengths and areas for development' (Schon, 1983).

Reflective practice is a cornerstone of high-quality Early Years provision in Wales, and its importance is clearly supported by key frameworks and legislation including the New Curriculum for Non-Maintained Settings, The National Minimum Standards and ESTYN among others.

In my capacity as a childcare advisor, Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988) is better suited to my role. This is due to its structured six-stage approach which encourages emotional awareness, critical thinking, and clear action planning. This makes it ideal for guiding practitioners through meaningful reflection and supporting professional growth. As Dewey (1933) noted 'reflection is a deliberate process that transforms experience into learning' an approach I aim to embed in advisory practice'.

References

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The professional Practitioner – Written Essay

What Is Professional Practise and What Is a Professional?

According to Collins Dictionary (2023) the definition of Professional practise is 'a term used to describe activities which will help you apply your knowledge to your industry, job role or workplace and refers to the conduct and work of someone from a particular profession'.

Health and Care Learning Wales tell us that professional practise refers to the behaviours, standards, and responsibilities expected of practitioners working with children. This practice is guided by legislation and quality standards, ensuring that practitioners provide inclusive, safe, and developmentally appropriate care. (Health and Care Learning Wales, n.d.).

An EY professional is anyone who works within the EY sector who can demonstrate expertise, strong ethical conduct, be a reflective practitioner and has a commitment to continuous learning.

'Being a professional involves not only having qualifications but also engaging in continuous learning and reflective practice to meet the evolving needs of children and families' (Lindon & Trodd, 2016, p. 3).

In the book Exploring and Celebrating the Early Childhood Practitioner, Solvason & Webb (2023, n.p) tells us 'The Early Childhood Practitioner is presented not just as a caregiver or educator, but as a specialist with pedagogical expertise, a diplomat across professional contexts, and a creative force pushing boundaries of traditional practice'.

Values in Professional Practice

Values are essential in professional practice, they enable practitioners to create safe, trusting, nurturing and professional meaningful environments. Having strong values ensures that children's rights and needs are respected and are at the centre of everything they do.

Values such as respect, empathy, honesty, and inclusivity not only form the foundation to all ethical decision making, but they also actively shape dynamics between practitioners, children, and families.

This is supported by Hallet (2013, p. 9) in their quote 'Professional practice in early childhood education is shaped by the values, ethics, and knowledge that practitioners bring to their work, and by the reflective processes they engage in to improve outcomes for children'.

Johansson & Einarsdottir (2018) argue that values should be embedded into daily routines, suggesting if this is consistent in daily interactions they move beyond abstract principles into real, lived experiences. This highlights the importance of modelling values in practice, as children internalise these through repeated interactions.

Additionally when these values are shared within a team, they contribute to a cohesive organisational culture that prioritises child centred care. This collective approach can lead to more consistent responses to children's needs and ultimately leads to better outcomes, particularly in settings with children with diverse needs.

Communication and Relationships

Effective communication and relationships are central to EY practice, not only because they help practitioners understand children's needs, but because they form the foundation for emotional security, learning, and inclusive care.

Reed & Walker (2015, p. 217) emphasise that 'Effective communication is central to building relationships with children, families, and colleagues, and is a key component of inclusive and responsive practice'.

Developing effective communication and relationships is also vital for building strong attachments. The importance of having a strong connection between practitioners and the children they care for was the British psychiatrists, John Bowlby's concept, which he introduced in the 1950s.

'A securely attached child will store an internal working model of a responsive, loving, reliable caregiver, and of a self that is worthy of love and attention and will bring these assumptions to bear on all other relationships' (Bowlby, as cited in Holmes, 1993, n.p).

Listening as a core element of communication plays a critical role in forming these relationships. McMahon & Dyer (2018, p.14) argue 'Listening to children's voices and

responding appropriately is a fundamental aspect of ethical and professional practice'.

This goes beyond passive hearing to intentional communication, where practitioners interpret and act on children's expressions, preferences, and emotions. This practice supports inclusivity by validating each child's unique experience and promoting a sense of belonging.

Effective communication is also essential in multi-agency collaboration, in cases where practitioners share information clearly and sensitively to support holistic care. Miscommunication or lack of professional trust can lead to fragmented support and missed safeguarding opportunities. Communication in EY goes beyond information exchange. It is strategic, ethical, and deeply connected to outcomes for children.

Knowledge and Safeguarding

Welsh Government tells us that 'Safeguarding is everybody's responsibility' (Welsh Government, 2022).

Additionally, Standard twenty of the National Minimum Standards (NMS, 2023, p.54) reinforces this by stating, 'Children are safeguarded from harm, abuse and neglect and parents are confident that all possible steps to safeguard children are taken'.

EY professionals have a duty to make sure that professional practice promotes clear communication, mutual trust and strong relationships between themselves, other professionals, families, and children. This ensures that everyone is knowledgeable, alert and empowered to act when safeguarding concerns arise.

They should possess the ability to act decisively in safeguarding situations and understand their duty of care in protecting children's rights and wellbeing. This includes responding to concerns in line with their own organisational protocols and legal frameworks.

It requires not only procedural competence but also professional judgement, which is shaped by experience, reflective practice, and ongoing training, all of which demonstrates that safeguarding is not an isolated task but a core aspect of professional identity and accountability in EY practice.

Partnership and Multi-Agency Working

According to the NSPCC publication - What helps to support effective multi-agency working and information sharing? (2025) 'Children are better supported and protected when everyone works together... joint decisions provide the best support for the child'.

The EY sector is made up of a wide range of professionals, each with their own skill set to be able to support the diverse needs of children.

This kind of multi-agency working is not only practical but strategic, it ensures that no aspect of a child's development is overlooked. For example, a child with speech and language delays may benefit from the combined input of a speech therapist, a key worker, and the child's family, each contributing insights that inform a tailored support plan.

Palaiologou tells us in the publication Ethical Practice in Early Childhood 'Multi-agency working enhances the support available to children and families, but requires clear communication, shared values, and mutual respect among professionals.' (Palaiologou, 2012, p. 115).

The involvement of all these professionals, working in a collaborative and coordinated way builds on trust, respect, effective communication, and shared goals and ensures that the child's best interests remain central.

Palaiologou also tells us that 'Practitioners must embody ethical values in their decision-making, especially when working with vulnerable children or in multi-agency contexts' (Palaiologou, 2012, p. 1).

This method strengthens early intervention efforts and ensures that care is delivered in a cohesive and child centred way, particularly for those requiring specialised support.

Observation and Planning Cycle

According to Birth to Five Matters, 'Observation enables us to be aware of and 'see' the unique child... and how what we provide supports their progress' (Early Years Coalition, 2021).

Effective observation, assessment, and planning help practitioners understand each child's developmental stage, needs, and interests, ensuring that learning experiences are tailored and meaningful.

This process is not only diagnostic but also reflective, allowing practitioners to adapt their approach in response to what they observe. 'Observation reveals what motivates and engages children, offering insight into their emotional states, social interactions, and emerging competencies' (Hwb, 2022).

By interpreting these observations, practitioners can make informed decisions that support inclusive and responsive practice.

UNCRC - Principles in Practice

'Understanding and implementing children's rights is central to ethical and inclusive early years practice.' (Palaiologou, 2012, p. 101)

Welsh Government states in What are Children's Rights? (Hwb, 2022) that the UNCRC underpins early years EY practice by ensuring children's rights to safety, education, participation, and protection.

Embedding these principles into daily practice not only ensures children are respected and supported to thrive but also reinforces the ethical responsibility of practitioners to advocate for children's voices and wellbeing. This rights-based approach shifts the focus from simply caring for children to empowering them as active participants in their own development, influencing how environments are shaped, and decisions are made within EY settings.

'Children's rights are central to every aspect of care, play and learning provision... not as an activity to be planned but as an everyday experience' (Education Scotland, 2022).

In Welsh legislation, Curriculum and Minimum Standards are all underpinned by the UNCRC, and although some of the articles may not sit directly within EY, an understanding of their relevance and how they are intertwined in our practice is vital.

Kanyal (2014, p. 18) tells us that 'Children's rights to participation, as outlined in the UNCRC, must be embedded in everyday practice to ensure their voices are heard and respected'.

Conclusion

Professional practice in the EY is inherently complex and dynamic. It goes beyond routine caregiving and is built on a values and knowledge driven approach that prioritises the rights, wellbeing, and holistic development of every child.

Practitioners engage in reflective practice and evaluation to meet the evolving needs of children in their care. This is enriched through collaborating with colleagues, families, and multi-agency professionals by drawing on shared expertise and different perspectives.

As highlighted by Hallet (2013), Johansson & Einarsdottir (2018), Palaiologou (2012) this multifaceted role demands a commitment to professional values, critical thinking, and a willingness to challenge traditional boundaries to create meaningful learning experiences and development opportunities for all children.

Welsh government outlines this in their Early childhood play, learning and care plan by reminding us that 'Children have the right to grow up in a happy, healthy, and safe environment. Children's rights in Wales are entitlements; they are not optional. They are set out in law.' (Welsh Government, 2024, p.6)

By using tools like the observation cycle, the Curriculum for Wales Assessment Framework, Safeguarding Wales Procedures and embedding UNCRC principles within all EY policies and procedures we can ensure that children's rights and needs remain at the very heart of all EY practice.

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