

What do I know already/ What have I learnt so far: Having 10 years of experience working in schools, I know the education system well and know what is expected of me. Completing my first university assignment has given me an insight of expectations and how online systems (Moodle) works.

What do I want to develop: I want to be able to feel 100% confident when supporting the children that I work with. This means making sure that I have up-to-date knowledge and to collaborate effectively with colleagues to ensure children can reach their full potential. I also want to make sure I am completing university work to a high standard which will support me as an effective practitioner.

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 objective	Success criteria (How will I know I have achieved this goal, how will I review this?)
<i>To continuously improve my skills and knowledge in order to become a successful and effective practitioner</i>	To ensure that I am an effective practitioner, I will make sure I have up-to-date knowledge of early years education and undertake any relevant professional learning to support children effectively.	I will attend all university lectures. Lectures provide an opportunity to gain knowledge directly from experts in the field. Lecturers are able to share their insights, research findings, and expertise, helping me to understand complex topics concerning early years education.	Whilst completing degree and ongoing – always able to improve.	Obtaining good results in assignments and feeling more confident in what I am delivering when working with children.
<i>To have better time management skills</i>	I will need to ensure that I have a healthy balance with work, university work and socialising. I need to make sure that I have full understanding of assignments and not leave writing/preparing assignments last minute.	Utilise tools such as calendars and to do lists to make sure that I am completing certain tasks in a certain time frame. I will prioritise what is more important and ensure I give myself time to read, research and understand assignments.	Embed by January 2024 but then ongoing.	I will know I have achieved this when I am finding it easier to fit assignments around socialising and not rushing to complete tasks not long before an assignment is due. If what I am doing is not working, I will review this and utilise different tools.
<i>Complete maths 'springboard' training and put it into practice</i>	I will complete the necessary training delivered by the EAS and use it in my practice.	I will need to ensure that I have access to all relevant materials in order to use this in my practice or use it to deliver intervention sessions. I will need to make sure that I use time well to fully understand how to deliver the sessions effectively and to make sure that all resources are printed and ready to use.	Complete training in October 2023. Delivering sessions effectively will be ongoing.	Observations by class teacher/SLT will confirm whether my delivering of sessions is adequate. I will be able to use my feedback form to review my delivering of these sessions and improve if necessary.

What is reflection and reflective practise?

Reflective practise is a concept that entails a planned and methodical approach to self-assessment, analysis, and evaluation of one's actions, decisions, and experiences with the aim of enhancing professional practise and personal development. According to (Hallet, 2013) due to the reform and changing policies in education, it "introduces new ideas, provides opportunities for reflection to inform professional practice."

From my own experiences, reflection has enabled me to improve on my practice which not only benefits myself as a practitioner but also the children I work with. For example, when recently completing a 360 review on myself, I had a clear indicator on aspects of myself I can reflect on professionally.

Why is reflective practise important to Early Years practise?

It is suggested that the early years sector is undergoing constant change, and it is becoming increasingly important for early childhood professionals to reflect on this environment. This is especially true when it comes to integrated working, which calls for a reflective and sensitive approach to creating new forms of multi-professional working (Paige-Smith and Craft, 2011). According to the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA), reflective practice can help practitioners to "identify strengths and highlight areas for development as well as pinpointing individual professional learning needs." This is particularly important in Early Years practise as it means changes and approaches can be made so children can achieve the best outcomes from a young age. It also allows the practitioner to evaluate the lessons learned and the experiences had with the children to make sure their unique needs and interests are satisfied.

The theory of reflective practise:

Here, I will discuss two different models on reflective practise. I will focus on Jasper's ERA cycle which contains three stages: Experience, Reflection and Action. I will also focus on Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle which contains four stages: Concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.

Jasper's ERA model

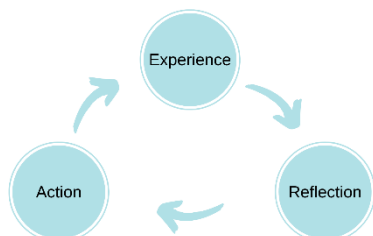


Image from University of Cambridge

Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle model

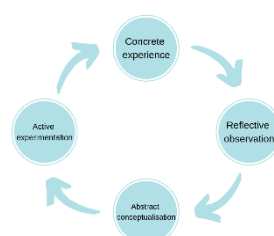


Image from University of Cambridge

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

Here I am going to compare, contrast and discuss the pros and cons of Jasper's Era model and Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle model. Both focus on reflective practise. Based on Jasper's ERA cycle (2013), she believes that reflective practise is centred on gaining knowledge by experience. An obvious similarity in both these models is that we start with an experience. This may be an experience that is either what we have already experienced or something that is entirely unfamiliar to us.

Secondly Kolb (1984) explains that it is particularly important to pay attention to the environment around the individual and their own reactions and thoughts that was experienced during the activity when conducting a reflective observation. This section of his model highlights how you reflect on your concrete experience previously completed. This promotes deeper thinking compared to Jasper's (2013)

ERA model as it allows the individual to reflect on emotions and feelings in detail on a certain experience.

Similarly, Jasper (2013) explores the idea of reflection on the second part of the ERA model. This allows the individual to reflect on feelings taken from the experience/situation, questioning how the individual could have responded differently, if there are any improvements that could've been made to make the experience better. It also allows the individual to reflect on what they have learnt from the experience and finally why did things possibly go wrong.

Kolb's (1984) next step is where the individual thinks about abstract conceptualisation. This again allows deeper thinking compared to Jasper's (2013) ERA model. Abstract conceptualisation allows the individual to develop thoughts, explanations, and hypotheses on observations once you have gathered knowledge. It's crucial to try to clarify how the concrete experience came to be what you saw.

Furthermore, it may identify areas that need to be improved or need further exploration.

Finally, Jasper (2013) completes her model with the idea of action. This is the time that an action plan is made where a similar experience or situation may arise in the future. It's important to question what would happen if a similar situation was to arise again and at what point would the learnings be used again from the experience and how would they be implemented. A downside to this could be that there is a focus on creating an action plan for a **similar** situation and there's not an opportunity to plan for a new experience and how aspects can differ.

Kolb (1984) presents the idea of active experimentation – how learnings are going to be put into practise. It allows the individual to reflect from over the cycle to plan your next action or activity. This then begins the cycle again where a new situation or experience is made, and the reflection process begins all over again. This allows a constant flow of reflection allowing us to continuously make changes and identify experiences that go particularly well.

Conclusion

To conclude, both models of reflection are well structured and easy to follow. It can be argued that Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle model allows individuals to activate deeper thinking and not only reflect on a particular experience but allows opportunity to think about how these learnings can be adapted to use within a new experience. In contrast, although a simple model, Jasper's (2013) ERA model does not focus on deeper thinking, and it only allows to create an action plan for an experience that could occur that would be like the experience reflected on. Also, the model isn't a continuous cycle where the action plan is linked back to the first point of a new experience where Kolb's (1984) is.

That being said, Jasper's (2013) ERA model is simple yet effective. It isn't time consuming and still allows reflection to occur.

Both models would allow a practitioner to successfully reflect on their practise and highlight strengths and weaknesses.

Recognise and analyse the significance of different aspects of professional practise and why these are important in meeting the individual and inclusive needs of children.

The term “professional practise” describes the norms, conduct and behaviour that you follow as a practitioner when conducting your job. According to Gasper (2015) “a ‘professional’ refers only to those with a qualification or specific expertise, but in early years there is a greater understanding of the value and importance of the qualities individuals demonstrate in practice, with or without formal qualifications.” According to Gasper (2015), an individual is awarded a professional title after completing a formal qualification such as a degree but argues that it is the values and understanding of the individual which makes them a professional in the early years sector.

Conversely, however Perez (2019) claims that there are three features that make a professional. She believes that professionals should have “specialised training”. This would be within the profession in which they are working. Secondly, she believes that professionals should have “recognition of the need for standards of practice”. This means that within a certain profession, the understanding of the need for set principles and norms that regulate the way work is conducted or services are offered is known as the understanding of the need for standards of practise. For example, within the education system, practitioners are expected to follow teaching standards. Perez’s (2019) third feature is “commitment to provide a service that goes beyond the personal interests of the professional”. This links to the need for practitioners to show that their values are important as a professional practitioner and professional practise.

It is important that practitioners have core values when carrying out their work. Values are significant for professionals in a variety of sectors because they impact the standard of services or work produced, provide as a moral and ethical basis for decision-making, and guide professional practice. Core values differs with different individuals. Core values may include respect, teamwork, fairness, personal development and relationships. Arthur, Davison and Lewis (2005) claim that

professional values are a “complex set of beliefs”. They consider that holding values is especially important in teaching and the early years. Arthur, Davison and Lewis claim that “values are an integral part of teaching, reflected in what is taught and also in how teachers teach, and interact with pupils.”

Similarly, Powell (2010) claims that people who are considering a career within the early years sector should have “genuine liking for and interest in children in their development.” This allows practitioners to build a positive, trust-based relationships with children. Children are more likely to open up and engage with adults who they sense genuinely care about them. Also, practitioners who are genuinely interested in children are better at listening to and understanding their needs and concerns. This leads to more effective communication, which is crucial for addressing any issues or challenges that children may face. This links nicely with Powell’s (2010) point of practitioners needing to have “good communication skills with children and Mums, Dads and other carers.” This means any issues that a child may be facing is easily communicated with parents and carers, meaning strategies can effectively be put into place. According to the Government website, “Offering a range of opportunities for parents and carers to become involved in their children’s learning is important.” This embeds the need of communication and ensuring that practitioners are making parents and carers an integral part of their children’s educational journey.

Powell (2010) also claims that it’s important to be able to work part as a team. Being able to work part as a team is crucial to ensure diverse needs are learning styles are adhered to. A team can cater to these individual needs more effectively, offering tailored support to each child to ensure that they are challenged appropriately and receive the help that they need. Showing good teamwork in the early years is also positive role modelling because children learn by example. When they see educators working collaboratively and respectfully with each other, they are more likely to develop positive social and teamwork skills themselves. Also, linking back to good communication skills, collaborative teams can facilitate better communication with parents and carers. Parents can receive a more complete picture of their child’s progress, challenges, and strengths, leading to a stronger partnership between home and school.

Having an in-depth knowledge and understanding is important to professional practise, especially in early years. As the new curriculum in Wales is being rolled out, it's important that everyone knows what is expected of them. In-depth knowledge equips professionals with the information and expertise needed to deliver good quality teaching and learning. Professionals who are considered experts in their field are more likely to produce high-quality work and are able to apply their knowledge to problem solving, innovation, and creative thinking, resulting in better outcomes for the children. It is also our responsibility as early years practitioners to safeguard each individual. It is important and necessary that practitioners have an in-depth understanding of the legislation relating to safeguarding children. According to article 19 from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) every child has the right to "protection from violence, abuse and neglect". This means that we have a moral and legal responsibility to protect children from "violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment." We as practitioners must follow safeguarding procedures to keep our children safe. The Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014 states that "a person exercising under this Act must seek to promote the well-being of people who need care and support. Well-being includes protection from abuse and neglect." That means that everyone has part to play in ensuring that the children that are under our care are safe. This act also places a legal duty on all practitioners to report safeguarding concerns.

It is important that practitioners have an in-depth understanding of abuse stated by safeguarding procedures. Children have the right to be protected from physical abuse. This means any kind of physical harm, for example, hitting, kicking and shaking. We can look out for the signs of physical abuse such as bruising or flinching. Practitioners should also look out for signs of sexual abuse including inappropriate sexualised behaviour. Children may also show signs of emotional abuse. They may show signs of this by appearing withdrawn, suffering with anxiety, and showing signs of distress. Signs of neglect may be shown. This may include obvious signs of health needs not being responded to or inappropriate clothing. Finally, practitioners should look out for signs of financial abuse. With the cost of living on the rise, children may be exposed to parents being in rent arrears and having a lack of money. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Multi-agency work is crucial in professional practise. Professionals from different agencies can offer a wider range of support and expertise. They are able to address a broader range of a child's needs, resulting in more comprehensive and holistic care. Multi-agency working enhances professional practise by promoting coordination, efficiency, expertise, and a more comprehensive approach to addressing more complex issues and challenges. It can lead to improved outcomes for the children.

The observation and planning cycle is a fundamental process in early childhood education and care that informs professional practise and ensures that practitioners are meeting the needs of children effectively. According to the Welsh Assembly Government, "by observing children while they are involved in activities, practitioners will find out how the children's skills are developing and what they are able to do." Practitioners can learn about children's skill development and abilities by observing them when they engage in various activities. It also allows planning to be individualised to the children that we are working with. It enables us to reflect on the learning that is being provided and allows changes to be made in the future. Article 29 (goals of education) of the UNCRC states that "education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full." By observing, it allows us get to know individual personalities to ensure the planning cycle is designed to allow children to reach their full potential. From progression step one in Wales, children have access to continuous and enhanced provision as well as completing a focused task in areas of learning and experience (AoLE). This is where children are given opportunities in the learning environment to participate in engaging and stimulating activities. Children can explore different areas such as role play, water play, block play and book corner. Observing in these areas allows practitioners to assess how children are progressing from a young age. Enhanced provision adds to the continuous provision in terms of extending resources and linking it to their learning. This may change on a weekly basis. A focussed task allows children to learn the basics of humanities or geography for example. Ephgrave (2022) talks about the idea of 'planning in the moment'. This is where a child chooses to play with something of interest and planning an activity in that moment. After observing the

child, a 'teachable moment' would occur where the practitioner would extend the learning, for example, creating a tower in the block play area with a certain number of blocks. This observation would then be recorded afterwards. As a result, children are more enthusiastic and engaged with their learning.

To conclude, professional practise is of paramount importance in early years. It serves as a bedding of ethical and responsible conduct, allowing practitioners to reflect and make changes. It allows practitioners to deliver high-quality teaching and ensuring the well-being of children is being met. Furthermore, it fosters accountability, continual learning, and adaptability. Professional practise plays a vital role in maintaining standards, values, safeguarding, and the rights of the children.

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