

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

According to Lindon and Trodd (2016), relevant curriculum and policy documents have emphasised the necessity of reflection as part of effective professional practice throughout the past several decades. Correspondingly, there has been increasing recognition of the necessity to educate early childhood practitioners who can think about what they do and build robust, practical abilities. Moreover, increased engagement in undergraduate Early Years courses in Foundation Degrees and Childhood Degrees has resulted in a more excellent intellectual knowledge of early years pedagogy. Also, the many approaches to Early Years Teacher Status emphasise the need for reflective practice in all forms of early childhood education. Furthermore, understanding the nature of reflective practice is also necessary if practitioners want to encourage and support reflection, originality, and creativity in children's thinking.

Given this, according to Reed and Canning (2009), **reflection** is a general term to describe behaviours including thinking and feeling about experiences and ideas to identify problems and develop new understandings. Correspondingly, Brock (2014) claims that reflection involves examining and diving into a topic or subject to investigate many viewpoints from distinct perspectives. Emotion and intuition are also significant in the introspective process. Moreover, the process of reflection, which includes reading and researching and gaining professional, practical, and personal experience, produces information and skills that allow understanding, empathy, and professional practice that could help children and families. Reflection on practice is used to provide ideas for improving practice. Furthermore, Reed and Canning (2009) claim that **reflective practice** is an ongoing learning journey that combines personal and professional qualities and attributes as the individual takes ownership of their thought processes and actions and develops a personal sense of responsibility for the child outcomes as individuals and as members of a community of practice. Moreover, the practitioner is seen as an "artist," and reflective practice is viewed as an art, a collaboratively applied and evolved creative process. Considering this, the imposition of a restrictive framework that does not appreciate variety in the workforce or permit different methods and ways of experiencing the educational processes might hinder the formation of thriving working communities and, as a result, the outcomes for the children, according to Reed and Canning (2009).

Correspondingly, according to Forde *et al.* (2006), early childhood educators should be able to express their educational and pedagogical goals and their values and beliefs to reflect on how they frame their actions and thoughts to offer a respectful and inclusive curriculum. Therefore, reflection must be meaningful for it to be purposeful, and for early childhood practitioners, this means it should be related to their work with students and their families.

Moreover, successful involvement between adults and children may establish and develop a rich learning environment in which children's ideas and interests are cultivated effectively. It is essential to consider how children connect and how adults communicate with them. Also, thinking together is another way of referring to continuously shared thinking, which is inextricably linked to a reflective approach to practice as an essential element of good early childhood education, according to Paige-Smith and Craft, 2008. In other terms, Schon (1983) asserts that the notion of reflective practice and becoming a reflective practitioner is concerned with the way professionals think in their work by identifying two reflection processes: "reflection in practice" and "reflection on practice". He highlights that these concepts illustrate two distinct stages of reflective activity. For example, an early childhood practitioner might reflect on their work by thinking about their actions with children while performing them. Also, an early years practitioner who focuses on their practice outside of the physical action of doing it elevates the reflective process by connecting practice to theories, developing theories in use, and establishing new working methods. Likewise, Hallet (2016) claims that developing reflective practice is complex and requires space and time. Given this, those who work with children and families may participate in reflective practice in the following ways:

According to Lindon (2010), **self-evaluation** should be an active process of analysing what the practitioners do in their work, including active continuous reflection on the potential gap between objectives and reality. This careful thinking process and constructive critical examination of current practice lead to an accurate judgment of strengths and strategies for improvement. However, according to Rinaldi (2005), Moss's concept of reflective practice as a complex process of meaning-making, a continual process of developing world theories, testing them through **conversation and listening**, and then recreating those theories, is inextricably tied with Reggio Emilia's pedagogy of listening. Additionally, Reed and Canning (2009), claim that reflective practice as an inherent component of professional identity develops most successfully in a culture or learning community where individuals actively listen to and react to the ideas and experiences of others. This concept applies to all early childhood professionals, including Early Years Professionals and postgraduate and higher education lecturers who guide practice in early years settings. Nevertheless, in practice, group reflection is more frequent than isolated reflection. **Group reflection** presents additional challenges and discussions, including differences in perception, opposing perspectives, competing facts, and confrontations across disciplines. As much as what is and is not stated, body language and voice tone impact the practitioners' perceptions. Additionally, nonverbal messages such as eye contact, gesture, and proximity may confirm or contradict the meaning of the words expressed. Moreover, understanding these interactions is essential for efficient group communication. Additionally, if records are taken, the selection of what to capture will be essential, according to Thompson, 2009.

In turn, this allows practitioners to make meaning of experience and practice and "experiment" with new ideas and methods of working. Practitioners may participate in this process independently, but the implications are limitless when others are involved. That is what makes reflective practice fascinating and challenging; it requires critical reflection on practice, but it is also a creative, open-ended activity with several possible meanings. It illustrates its significance as a fundamental component of the notion of active learning and continuous professional growth, according to Reed and Canning (2009).

Furthermore, Brock (2010) claims that **reflection-on-reflection** denotes an additional dimension of a practitioner's reflective process. It implies participation by a colleague at work, researcher, or mentor who will actively listen to or read the practitioner's reflections and respond in ways that further develop the critical reflection. After all, the procedure is not intended to evaluate the practice but rather to function as a mirror to obtain more information about the practice or event.

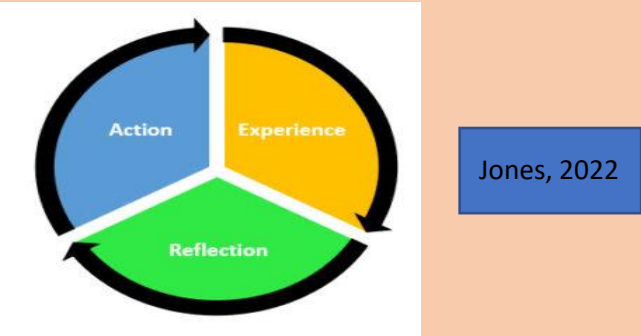
Moreover, practitioners might use reflective time and space to assess provision and practice given the work of others through **visiting** other schools, locations, or children's centres to observe and share the practice with others. Outstanding nurseries and schools may share their best practices with others as a model for continuous professional development, according to Pen Green (2012).

Alternatively, Tsang (2007) maintains that a **journal** is a valuable tool for developing reflective practice because it provides a space for reflective thought. Moreover, keeping a reflective journal encourages the practitioner to think more profoundly about situations, transforming the writing into an internal debate. Also, the activity of reflective writing is a powerful tool for reflection, according to Bolton (2014) since it facilitates professional growth and development. Notably, this private space allows the practitioners to collect information, write about concerns, conflicts, and challenges, and investigate their thoughts and reactions to circumstances. It may also include material, Internet clips, newspaper and magazine articles highlighted with critical notes.

Including, numerous models of reflection, such as Kolb's (1984) cyclical model of exploring, reflecting, conceptualise, and experience and Gibbs' (1988) cyclical model of description, emotion, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan, are deeply rooted in the reflecting landscape. As they begin to learn how to reflect, novice reflectors find the availability of such models beneficial. Their selected model will enable them to go methodically through the many components of their experience, bringing to awareness their ideas, emotions, beliefs, and biases, which may be further commented on in terms of complexity, context, relevance, and challenge. Beginners should be encouraged to use the model that makes the most sense to develop their reflective style. They should work confidently to develop a profoundly inquiring reflective method that works efficiently from a simple personal journal to a closer, more comprehensive look at the activities, perspectives, and consequences that create their everyday routines. This closer examination lets people decide what changes might be needed or might be helpful, according to Campbell-Barr and Leeson (2016).

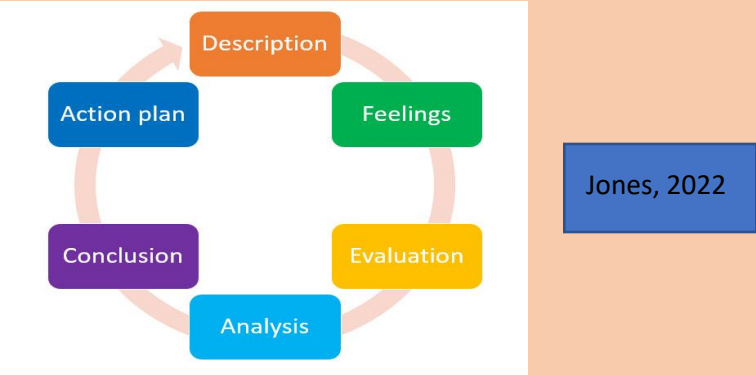
Furthermore, the Open University (2022) claims that complex theories support reflective thinking and reflective behaviour. Moreover, understanding the similarities and variations between some of these models of reflection should assist practitioners in getting acquainted with the main concepts, permit them to investigate higher-level reflective inquiries, and give strategies to organise their learning, planning, and action better.

Namely, the ERA cycle, Jasper (2013) is one of the simplest reflection models, with just three different stages:



The cycle indicates that the practitioners will begin with an experience they have had previously or are entirely new. This experience may be favourable or harmful and may be work-related or unrelated. After experiencing something, the practitioner will begin to think about what occurred. That will help them process the event, assess their reactions to what occurred, and determine the next steps. It nonetheless leads to the cycle's last element: taking action. This action will result in another experience, continuing the cycle. What the practitioner does as a consequence of an experience varies from individual to individual, according to Jasper, 2013.

Another model of reflection, Gibb's Reflective Cycle, adds additional phases. It is one of the most complex reflection models. Gibb's cycle is composed of six steps:



Similar to the previous model, Gibb's approach starts with an overview of the event. It then urges practitioners to concentrate on their feelings during and after the experience. The subsequent phase entails evaluating the event - what was positive or negative from their perspective. Practitioners may then analyse the circumstance and attempt to make sense of it using this approach. This study will conclude with alternative activities (if any) that may have produced a different outcome. The last stage is creating an action plan of measures that may be taken the next time a similar event arises (Gibbs, 1998).

At the same time, all models are hypothetical, and although they are intended to represent reality, actual life is more complex. Given this, while models have a substantial contribution, they also present limitations. It is easy to get embroiled in attempting to fulfil the model rather than concentrating on the problem. Instead of proceeding with their solution, the practitioners may struggle to replicate the model's solutions. No amount of modelling can address the practitioner's feelings in this situation, according to Hargreaves and Page, 2013.

Because teaching is a diverse, complex, and nuanced profession heavily relying on intuition, teachers' judgment is dominated by intuition, and intuitive decision-making may enhance and complement logical decision-making, according to Sipman *et al.* (2021). Moreover, circumstances in the classroom are only partially predictable and within the teacher's control; consequently, instructors must continually respond to complicated and unexpected situations in short moments. Therefore, intuition is an essential ability that (often unintentionally) helps instructors manage challenging classroom possibilities. (Sipman *et al.*, 2021)

Furthermore, Reed and Canning (2009) claim that adult education is generally built on Maslow's concept of "self-actualisation" — the belief that people strive to reach their potential as a natural process of lifelong progression. Given this, professionalism is defined as identical to quality, where quality is not just seen in terms of inspection quality but also the concept of understanding what constitutes excellent quality since the practitioner has considered what this implies. Additionally, Pound (2008) believes that another measure of professionalism is the practitioner's consciousness of accountability for practice.

In conclusion, according to Ghaye (2011), reflection uses experience, intuition, knowledge, and research processes to enhance the practitioner's capacity to intervene, understand, and act constructively on achievements, challenges, conflicts, and essential questions. In addition to revealing choices, possibilities, and paths for proper and sustainable action, these methods may also provide alternatives, opportunities, and pathways. In this view, the result of reflection is the generation of new, applicable, and, ideally, vast understanding to support the construction of a better future for everybody. Moreover, the fundamental purpose of reflective practice is to improve the quality of education.

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