

Introduction

This briefing paper will detail information on reflective practice, the importance of reflective practice, how it can be implemented in an early year's settings and models and theories to support reflective practice.

What is reflective Practice?

Reflective practice is looking at what is done, questioning it and the reasons why it is done, it provides learning opportunities. Reflective practice allows practitioners to ask what, why and how questions, by doing this gives chance for learning, it allows extension on the practitioner's knowledge and behaviours and use them within everyday life and their working role, reflective practice creates innovative ideas on how best to enhance support in their role moving forward. Lifetime training (2020).

Below is Gibbs model of reflection cycle that can be used in practice, using this model will help practitioners to evaluate, question and assess appropriately, by using this model they will be able to look at what went well and what did not and process these outcomes for future planning and work.



Gibbs (1988) model of Reflective cycle. Reflective toolkit (2020).

Gibbs reflective cycle is called 'learn by doing' Gibbs states if reflection is used throughout learning it will have a positive impact on actions within the role undertaken and allows for a positive performance in the future. Learning performance (2019).

Incorporating reflective practice to early years settings and professional development.

Early years practitioners use reflection daily within their role without even knowing they are using it; this skill must be developed.

In the early years environment practitioners can become reflective in their practice, thinking and learning given the right support and guidance, having the correct tools enables practitioners to engage positively in reflection.

Early years is continuously fast changing if it is the practice, policies, environment, expectations, staff or the Childrens development or way of learning, therefore practitioners need to be able to incorporate reflective practice into their work to be able to process and adapt to the pace of change. When practitioners use reflective practice in setting it allows them to reflect on their decisions, experiences, knowledge, and practice by doing so gives them the opportunity to grow and develop, when using reflective practice in setting practitioners can look at what was done, the reason and what they would do differently in the future, consequently it produces a positive learning opportunity for future planning and practice. When used correctly reflection allows practitioners to make informed judgements, professional decisions and empowers practitioners according to Robins et al., By using this skill allows the practitioner to develop their professional knowledge and development, broadening and deepening their knowledge and understanding improves effective practice and provision for the children and meet the changes remembering the child is always at the forefront of every decision made, the child's rights and needs are paramount. Using reflective practice acknowledges professional understanding not just what the practitioner has been taught or told, using personal values and beliefs reflects on the practitioners' actions and responses which should relate to both children and their families demonstrating good practice, therefore reflective practice should be integrated in all practitioners, it is essential to professional practitioners and the children in their care. Being able to be a reflective practitioner is an essential skill in the early years as it allows the practitioner to engage with children, families, colleagues, multi agencies and others, they will be able to articulate and communicate the message they are trying to get across professionally and appropriately using their knowledge and skills to the best of their ability. Brock (2014).



Practitioners can use a reflection chart to record their daily, weekly experiences in the work environment, by using a chart to document the working week helps to develop an understanding of what was done, why it was done and what changes need to be made, if any. It also promotes self-awareness, new skills, reflection on decision making, provides experience and growth, will inevitably impact performance positively as well as promoting positive engagement in the workplace. When something is written down it can be scrutinised and thought about in more depth as it is visually available, something to go back to and back over, it allows the practitioner to be critically aware of the professional practice, expectations, and responsibilities, it can improve outcomes in a positive and reflective manor. It is a learning opportunity for the practitioner, the practitioner can be truthful in the findings, relating experiences and theoretical frameworks.

Being able to connect reflective practice with the workplace is vital, work-related learning gives the practitioner experiences through their working role, work-based learning expands knowledge and understanding therefore the practitioner's experiences are enhanced. The knowledge and understanding achieved creates transitional change in professional practice, this produces new theories to use in practice, these new theories work with professional practice and has a positive impact on the practitioners personal and professional development, the practitioner's newfound knowledge boosts their self-esteem and confidence. Reflective practice expands on professional practice through questions and challenge, by being able to use critical reflection professional practice matures. (Hallet, 2013, p.42-47). Practitioners also learn through interaction and engagement with others and by doing, being involved provides opportunity for vocational learning and transferable skills that can be implemented in their own work. Practitioners who are supported in their work-based learning can develop both personally and professionally. When supported in their reflective learning practitioners gain growth in their professional development, the workplace manager or leader should provide formal and informal reflective time, this can be done with colleagues chatting, this would be a time for informal reflection and promote the use of sustained shared thinking, staff meetings where group reflection is used or at appraisals where formal reflection would be used, enabling reflective opportunities sees change and development within the provision and the practitioner to feel a part of the process. (Hallet, 2013, P.55). Being able to look at different perspectives gives practitioners the opportunity to analyse situations, problems, or issues by feeling, thinking, and reflecting by using these emotions will have a positive impact for the children and their learning.

Many different theorists have an opinion on reflective practice and have an impact on education providers and practitioners and are linked closely in their work ethics and why things are done. Below are two different models from two different theorists Dewey and Gibbs, both are promoting reflection, and interpret reflection differently, both models would be useful to use for reflection in the early years.



Dewey's model of reflection thought and action (1933).

John Dewey states "Reflection is a thought process, a cognitive process that people need to develop, looking over what is done is being able to draw out what has occurred. Dewey also believed in learning from reflecting on experience rather than learning from experience. Brock (2014).

In contrast Schon suggests there are two levels of reflection, reflection-on and reflection-in. Brock (2014).



Schon's concept of reflective practice (1983).

Donald Schon believed using reflection is important for continuous learning and is a big attribute of professional practice. Schon's theory of tacit knowledge is that every professional needs to understand what they think and do in everyday practice.

Practitioners need to remember to make connections by using the theorists, models, and research, when doing this reflective thinking can be put into practice and enables continuous learning. Reflection of working with children is an integration of theory and practice within experience. Work-based learning helps the practitioner see what they do daily, then use the theory with

work-based practice to connect the links with what is done in practice, what needs changing, use the theorists for understanding, link the practice to the theory. Hallet (2013).

Conclusion

Reflection is not a natural skill; it takes time and experience to be able to put into practice effectively and efficiently. Once the right skills and tools are used reflective practice has a positive outcome not only for the practitioner but the provision and children too, it supports engagement, it allows for a high-quality provision with the right learning outcomes and high-quality experiences for the children with all their needs being met. Reflection is beneficial to all.

The practitioner progresses in their professional development once being able to use reflective practice and reflective thinking it supports confidence in what the practitioner is doing, it provides them with a new skill and knowledge. Reflection and reflective practice are the principles of professionals and professional development.