

Element 2: Reflective log

<i>Brief description of the activity</i>
Decorating ready-made Christmas cakes with five children, each child being five-years-old. This was to be done while the other fifteen children in the class were engaged in other activities with the teacher and teaching assistant. Once the activity was complete I would then start the activity from the beginning with another five children and repeated this until every child within the class had a chance to take part.
<i>Aim/Objective of the activity</i>
To allow the children to express creativity and develop their creative skills in decorating cakes. To develop fine motor skills while decorating and to develop the children's knowledge of food preparation and hygiene via tasks such as handwashing before dealing with any food substances.
<i>Your role</i>
My role was explain to the children the stages of decorating the cakes and to aid them in following these steps and repeat the steps where necessary. I also had to explain and demonstrate good hygiene practice and also supervise the children in order to prevent them from any possible harm. In order to perform my role effectively I had to ensure I worked with the correct adult to child ratio. Gov.uk (2017) states within their Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage that when the children are above three years of age one adult should work with eight children. However, NSPCC (no date) recommends a ratio of one adult to six children when working with children between four and eight years of age. Furthermore NIDirect.gov.uk (no date), also support the idea of a ratio of one adult to eight children for five year olds. Since there were twenty children in the class I decided to work with a quarter of the class at a time. Therefore working with five children at a time falls within the suggested adult to child ratio.
<i>Positive aspects – why?</i>
Working well within the recommended adult to child ratio allowed me to focus more on each individual child in the activity and provide them with more assistance where necessary. Each child I worked with seemed very engaged in the task as a result. Having lots of decorations and choices for the children to decorate their cakes with allowed them to express their creativity. The children

also responded well to the hygiene aspect of the activity, each child being eager to wash their hands and put on their apron in preparation for the task to begin.

Challenging aspects – why?

The most challenging aspect was time. As suggested by the Ministry of Education, Guyana (no date), there are benefits to keeping to time and routine within classroom settings such as managing behaviour and teaching responsibility. However, Bershwinger and Brusseau (2013) discuss how it can be disadvantageous to have to end activities in order to keep to routine, stating that not enough time is allocated to activities and that often some activities are taking preference over others. I found that keeping to time can be challenging when a child is very engaged within a task yet taking a long time to bring the task to completion. There was a limited amount of time available to complete the activity as the children would be due to go on their afternoon break so therefore any of the children involved would not have been allowed the luxury of taking their time on the task due to having to keep to the school schedule and routine.

What knowledge was demonstrated?

According to BBC.co.uk (no date) children develop a lot of knowledge through cooking. They discuss how children can develop mathematical knowledge. This was evident in my activity by asking the children to count the decorations they were adding onto the cake. Also by cutting the rolled out the marzipan and icing into a circle in order to place it onto the circular cake therefore developing mathematical knowledge of shapes. BBC.co.uk [no date] also discuss how language can be developed during cooking. This was evident in my activity by my constant discussions with the children about how they are decorating the cake and my introducing them to words they may never have come across such as how one child learnt the word 'marzipan'. Decorating the cakes also helped develop the children's knowledge of handling small objects therefore enhancing their fine motor skills.

What skills were demonstrated?

Cooking and creative skills were demonstrated by myself as they would have been required to decorate the cake and to show the children how to decorate their own cake.
Hygiene skills were also demonstrated as I had to show the children how to wash their hands before dealing with food and explain the importance of food hygiene.
Another skill demonstrated was time keeping as I had limited time for the activity and had to ensure each child had a decorated cake to go home with and no child was left out.

<i>Which values were demonstrated?</i>
I demonstrated kindness and understanding during the activity. This was shown when children came across any difficulty and frustration within their ability to complete the task. I kindly and calmly explained again and helped where necessary. This was a value I had to demonstrate several times throughout the activity as quite a few of the children got frustrated with the task when they came across difficulties such as not being able to get the decorations to stay where they wanted them. However, a calm, kind explanation and assistance worked on every occasion where this happened. I was also non-judgemental and inclusive as I ensured that every child within the class had the chance to take part in the activity within a group of five and treated each and every child equally and aimed to spread my time between them as evenly as was possible.
<i>What could have been done differently? Why?</i>
I could have had more time allocated to the activity in order for it not have felt so rushed. I could have possibly started the activity before lunch and continued after lunch break but before last break if necessary as a way of working around the school schedule and still allowing each child sufficient time to complete the task at their own pace. This would have allowed the aims and objectives to be reached to a higher standard.

The Importance Of Reflection Within The Early Years

This paper aims to discuss how and why reflective practice should take place within any early settings. Firstly, what is reflective practice? In answer to that question Bassot (2016) describes reflection as an act of deep thinking in order to obtain a deeper understanding of practice. However Clarà (2015) has a slightly different view on what reflection is, stating that reflection is a natural process that occurs in all aspects of life. Lindon (2012) states that reflective practice is something that is expected from every early years practitioner and that more experienced practitioners explore reflection at a greater depth.

Why Reflect?

Lindon (2012) states that reflection is crucial to improvement and ensuring best practice. Paige-Smith and Craft (2011) support this, stating that reflection is essential in order to keep up to date in this era of rapid change. Stephens (2014) further expands on this area, talking about how reflection leads to infinite learning, to always expanding your knowledge and therefore improving upon your practice and quality of care.

An efficient reflective practitioner is:

Open-minded, responsible and whole-hearted

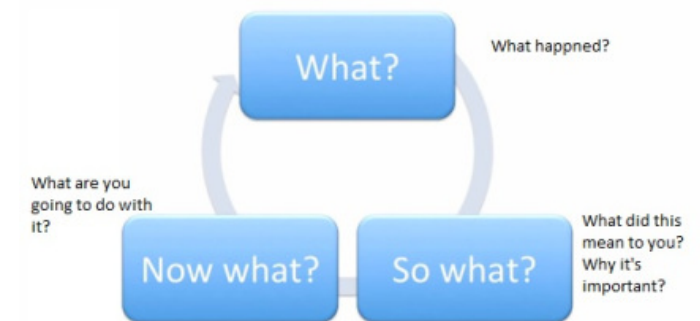
These are the three qualities that Ruth-Sahd (2003) states are the three main traits of a reflective practitioner, suggested by Dewey.

How to Reflect: Rolfe's Model Of Reflection

To look into how to reflect there are many different models of reflection available in order to follow. One example is Rolfe's model of reflection which is looked at by the University of Exeter (no date). Rolfe's cycle is split into three sections as shown and described in the diagram to the right. According to the University of Exeter (no date) Rolfe's cycle is useful in supporting novice reflectors due to how easy it is to follow. The three steps of the cycle are very basic, leaving the user to go into as much depth in to each section as they feel relevant. This cycle predominantly shows that by questioning what is going on, what that means and what you can then do about it you are able to reflect and make improvements.

Rolfe's Model Of Reflection

Reflective Practice – Rolfe's minimal model



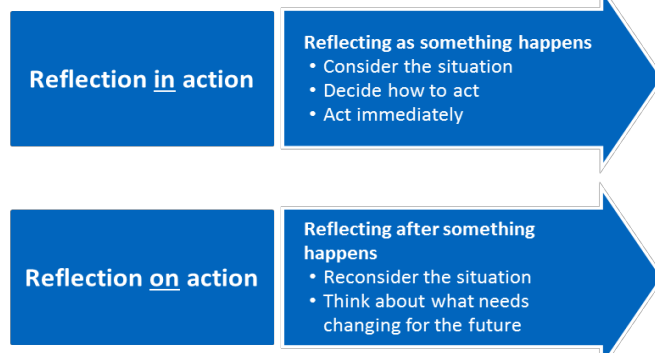
(Source: Cosmic Box, no date)

What is Professional Practice?

Taggart (2015) explores the idea of a practitioner's standard of professional practice being split into two different parts. Taggart states that practitioners should have the professional attitude of complying with standards that have been set and the need for evidence of improvement of the children in their care; but then further explains how professional practice also includes a different side, which is a more fundamental attitude of practice where practitioners know that their priority is the safety and well-being of those within their care. However, Stacey (2009) looks at professional practice from another angle, stating that your ability to work professionally comes from your ability to work efficiently with other adults involved within the children's care. Lindon (2012) also puts forward a different idea of professional practice; believing that professional practice is about thinking about what you are doing at all times and always looking to develop your skills. Placing all these ideas about professional practice together paints an all-round picture of it being an ability to provide the highest quality care possible and constantly striving to improve that ability.

How to Reflect: Schon's Model Of Reflection

Another model of reflection that can be used in order to reflect upon your practice is put forward by Schön (2016). Schön talks about reflecting in action, which is about making changes during any activity in order to improve the quality of the activity as it takes place. He then also talks about reflecting on action, which is about looking back on the activity afterwards to evaluate where improvements can be made for the future.



The Need For Critical Thinking

Open University (no date) states that the terms critical thinking and reflective thinking can be used interchangeably. This is agreed by the university of Tennessee (no date) which states that reflecting critically is a way of deepening understanding on a subject. The university of sussex (no date) describes critical thinking as using your ability to reason and question ideas. This is supported by Leicester and Taylor (2010) who also describe critical thinking in a similar way.

Supporting Best Practice

There are several organisations designed to promote and support best practice. Three are listed below.

- Estyn (no date) is a crown body established in Wales to inspect nurseries and schools. They state that best practice is innovative and interesting.
- Care Inspectorate Wales (no date) is an independent regulator of social care and childcare. They state that best practice includes developing five values, which are; Integrity, Respect, Caring, Fair and Professional.
- Wales PPA (no date) is an organisation promoting the development of education. They support the idea of best practice being inclusive of everyone working together for the best interest of the child.

In conclusion, reflection is a key tool in ensuring that you improve upon your level of professional practice. Rolfe and Schön's models are only two examples of reflective models that are available to assist a practitioner's ability to reflect. However, whichever model is used, with the right qualities and values practitioners are able to reflect and notice where areas of improvement can be found.

Element 4: Personal Development Plan

<i>Area for further development</i>	<i>Why?</i>	<i>How?</i>	<i>Where?</i>	<i>When?</i>
Knowledge Understand what is needed and required of a social worker	In order to work as a social worker within my community and begin my career as a qualified social worker.	Apply for the social work course at Swansea University As shown by Swansea University (no date) Cost per year: £7.200. Application to Student Finance Wales would be required to aid with funding Minimum entry requirements are a 2:2 from my current degree. Maximum effort would be required to ensure that grade or higher is obtained.	Swansea University	Application would need to be submitted by December 2019. Application to Student finance wales would be required once position on the course has been confirmed. Two year long course commences on September 2020
Knowledge Learn and speak Welsh	In order to improve my career prospects, broaden my social skills and to boost my self esteem as a speaker of a second language.	Enrol onto a Welsh course such as the one offered by Learn Welsh (2018) That particular course costs £120. However this course already started back in September 2018. I will look in the future to see if courses start in 2019.	Ysgol Y Strade, Pwll or possible other location depending on the location of courses are available in 2019.	The current course runs between 28/09/2018 and 12/06/2019 on Wednesday evening between 18:00 – 21:00 I will look back on the Learn Welsh website from June 2018 to see if the same or a similar course runs on similar dates, times and costs in 2019/2020 that works around my time spent in university.

Skills Cooking/Baking	In order to cook and bake higher quality and more nutritious foods, because I feel like being able to cook and bake well is very useful and transferable skill to have. It would be a transferable skill while working as a social worker as I could pass on my knowledge of cooking to underprivileged families that I would be working with.	Spend time cooking and baking with my sister who has much training and is highly qualified in this skill. She will be able to pass on her expertise to myself if given time and effort to do so.	My Sister's kitchen	Every Sunday afternoon commencing in 2019
Skills Academic Writing	In order to improve my quality of academic writing and gain higher grades within my assignments.	Not leave assignments to last minute in order to allow more time for effort being placed on academic writing skills. Visit Student Services to ask for advice on academic writing skills.	Student Services	From when my next assignment is given.
Skills Spelling	To improve my ability to spell words without using spell check.	Not leave assignments to last minute so I have more time to focus on spelling when writing. The Guardian (no date) states that to learn how to spell you must recognise, understand and correct your spelling errors, therefore I will take time to recognise and learn how the word is spelt as opposed to simply clicking the correct option on spell check in order to help improve my ability to spell.	When working on assignments	From when my next assignment is given.

Values Kindness	In order to be kinder and friendlier as I feel that is a value appreciated by many, especially by young children.	Frequently take time to assess my own mood in order to ensure any negative emotions I may be feeling are not projected onto others in a form of unkindness	Everywhere	From today
Values Non - Judgemental	In order to be more understanding of individuals and what makes them individual. To broaden my knowledge of different ethnicities and cultures and become more accommodating of their differences.	Take time to research any different religions, ethnicities, disabilities, etc that I may come across. Do not be afraid to ask people about their religion, ethnicity, disability, etc where appropriate in order to learn more about it so that I am able to be more accommodating to any differences where necessary.	Everywhere	From today

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