

The importance of reflective practice in the Early years.

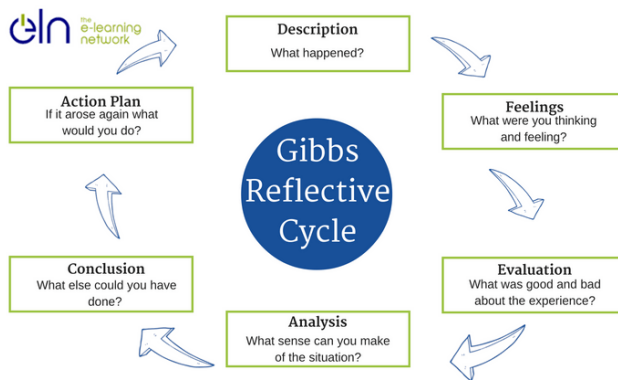
Reflection in the early years.

Cambridge Dictionary (2018) explains that the term reflection means to give consideration or thought to something. Reed and Canning (2009) explain that reflection in the early years involves practitioners thinking about and considering policies and practice. Reflective practice has become a very familiar term in the early years sector explains Lindon. J. (2012) and it is the expectation that all early year's practitioners can reflect on their work with families, children and other professionals.

There are certain ways to support a practitioner's reflection, for example using reflective models.

Gibbs Reflective model.

An example of a reflective model is Gibbs' (1988) reflective model. This reflective model contains six steps, which require the person reflecting to answer questions to form a deep reflection. These steps include: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and action plan. (Nicole Brown, 2015) Crowe Associates Ltd (2018) explains that this model is useful as it allows practitioners to look back on their work and discover what they did well and what they could do better next time to improve. Also, it provides deep reflection as the cycle has many steps which take in to account the practitioner's feelings. As the Open University (2018) argues, this model could be biased and result in false reflection. This is because the practitioner reflecting could already have judgements about the reflection or activity rather than answering the questions in the cycle honestly. For example, a practitioner could complete a play activity with the children and decide to reflect at the end using Gibbs' model. When the practitioner comes to the evaluation step they could answer that they didn't think anything went well. This could be because the practitioner was new to the field and lacked confidence, but this would be a false reflection and would not allow the practitioner to reflect effectively to improve for the next time they completed the activity.



The E- Learning Network (2016)

*Purposeful reflection means not just thinking about our behaviors and their effect on the work we do, but **doing something about it**. "What am I going to do differently in order to better meet student needs?"*

- Tony Frontier

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(Pinterest, 2018).

Gibbs reflective cycle in practice.

Gibbs reflective model would be used in the early years to support practitioners in their reflection.

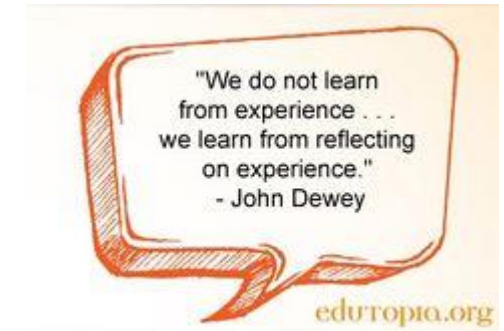
For example, a practitioner could complete an activity and would then take the time to reflect on the activity to evaluate what went well and what could be improved for next time. MSC Student (2015) argues that this model helps professionals to continue their professional development by allowing them to reflect through distinctive steps to fully explore the event or situation.

Donald Schon's model.

Schon's model is based on in action reflection and on action reflection as Ramage (2017) explains. Ramage (2017) gives the example that in action reflection is reflecting during an activity and on action reflection is reflecting after an activity. Buwert (2012) argues that this model is good for early years practitioners as it allows them to develop the ability to determine how to approach situations and activities by reflecting and developing their knowledge. An example of Donald Schon's model in practice would be a practitioner completing an activity with children which may not go as well as they had hoped. They then decide whether to change the activity there and then or wait until after the activity to reflect and decide what they will change next time. In comparison to Gibb's model there are less steps.

Reflective practice for practitioners.

Bleach (2014) explains that during an experiment to debate early years professionalism, by evaluating their practice and considering their practice in relation the curriculum, practitioners gained awareness of their teaching and developed new knowledge. Estyn (2015) published a document which explained the need for high quality practitioners and leaders in practice. It stated that the best way to improve learner outcomes throughout Wales was to ensure that practitioners can identify their skills for example leadership skills and professional skills to enhance their stage of development and to improve and acquire more roles and responsibilities. This will enhance their continuous professional development. According to McLeod (2016) Bandura's theory on social learning explains the role of the practitioner in an early years setting as being a 'role model.' When practitioners reflect upon their own work and encourage the children to reflect, it will allow them to reflect upon their own learning and will encourage problem solving. Collin et al. (2012) argues that reflective practice is unclear and has yet to be determined properly which causes it to be less effective, as well as this it argues that reflection should not be used as much in practice until it has been determined and made clear to practitioners so that everyone has the same definition.



(Russell, N. ,2015)

Reflective log.

Description of the activity:

The activity was a discovery activity. It was animals in ice, which I then put in the tuff tray and played with them with the children, trying to melt the ice and using language such as ‘melting’ to try and develop the children’s language and enhance it.

Aim or objective of the activity:

The aim of the activity was to allow the children to explore the ice and develop their language development by picking up newly learned words. Also, to encourage the children to problem solve by figuring out how to get the animals out of the ice.

My role:

My role in the activity was to follow the children’s lead when they explored the ice and to see what ideas they would come up with to melt the ice. As well as this my role was to use language that the children may not have heard before. By modelling this language, they could use it themselves and it could be stored in their memory for them to use during similar activities.

Positive aspects and why?

One of the positive aspects of the activity was that the children enjoyed playing with the ice, lots of them had not played with ice before and liked the cold feeling it had. Also, the activity kept the children engaged for a long time as they tried lots of different things to get the animals out of the ice. The children also explored other resources to try and get the animals out. As well as this, it allowed me to introduce concepts to the children for example ‘cold and hot,’ ‘wet and dry,’ and ‘big and small.’ Many of the children had a good understanding of these concepts by the time they finished the activity.

Challenging aspects and why?

A challenging aspect of the activity was the fact that there was nothing else in the tuff tray and so it did not look like an appealing activity. The children were not drawn to it until they touched the ice and then enjoyed playing with it. As well as this, some of the children were not interested in animals and so did not want to play with the activity. Also, as we were outside and there were lots of other activities going on including bikes and cars and the ice activity was not as popular as the cars and bikes.

What Knowledge was demonstrated?

I feel like I demonstrated a good understanding of the children at the setting and was able to meet the children's individual needs effectively. For example, if I knew a child needed support in counting, I introduced counting to the activity by encouraging the children to help me count the animals stuck in the ice. Also, I demonstrated good knowledge of the Foundation Phase Profile (FPP) which allowed me to make observational notes on the children relating to the FPP so that they could be used as evidence. (Welsh Government, 2017).

What skills were demonstrated?

I think I demonstrated good communication skills, by communicating well with the children during the activity. I feel like I also demonstrated good language skills, by using language the children may not have heard before, thus allowing them to build on their own language skills. As well as this, I presented a good understanding of the children I work with in relation to how they play. For example, one child is quite shy and likes to play near an adult, because I knew this I called him over and introduced the activity to him and played with him until he became more comfortable. Whereas, some of the other children did not need this support as they are confident going to new activities and playing with the other children.

Which values were demonstrated?

Throughout the activity I demonstrated respect, all children were offered the activity but were not forced to take part in the activity and so I respected their wishes to either take part or not and I respected the parents by ensuring the children wore aprons to keep their clothes dry and if their clothes did get wet I changed them. Also, I feel that I valued diversity and inclusion, this was because I allowed any child to take part regardless of their ethnic background or religion, I also did not favour any children during the activity and provided all the children with the same opportunities. All of the children learn differently so I valued diversity by changing my language to allow the children to understand me.

What could have been done differently? Why?

If I were to complete the activity again, I would make the activity look more appealing by adding different materials to the tuff tray. For example, I could add shaving foam, or snow. Also, I could add colour to the ice to make it colourful and interesting to the children. This would also give the opportunity for them to learn the names of the colours. Another thing that could be changed is the fact that it was only animals which were frozen in the ice. When doing the activity again, I could freeze different things such as cars, or small world people. This could engage the children who like these toys more than animals and would allow them to explore these toys in different materials. Next time I could complete the activity in a quieter area, although the activity was a play-based activity, lots of learning could be gained through it but it was difficult to hear the children talking because of the other children playing closely. This would also solve the problem of the children being more attracted to the bikes rather than the ice activity.

Personal Development Plan

Area for further development (provide further details)	Why?	How?	Who/Where?	When?
1. Knowledge Mathematical development.	To go on to do the PGCE I will need a higher grade in my maths GCSE. Currently I have a C and will need a B or above.	Complete a maths course and sit the WJEC exam to gain the qualification.	Gower College Swansea, Tycoch campus.	It is a one-year course with the exam at the end, I would start after I finish my degree. (September 2019) and it would take me until September 2020 to finish.
2. Knowledge PGCE qualification.	I would like to do the PGCE course to become a teacher in a primary school.	I will need to finish my degree, complete my maths course and gain a B or above in the exam and then I would need to apply for a place on the PGCE course.	I would apply a place on the PGCE at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Swansea campus.	The PGCE takes one year to complete. I would finish my degree and my maths

				course and then I would apply for a place on the PGCE. The rough date would be September 2020 and I would finish it in September 2021.
3. Skills Leadership skills.	To further my development and career it is important to enhance my leadership skills to prepare myself to eventually take a job as a deputy manager or manager of a setting.	I can do this by using my initiative to take the lead during sessions rather than following someone else. By completing my degree to ensure I have the correct qualification to become a manager.	Shadowing my manager and deputy manger to ensure I understand all the roles and responsibilities they must complete.	I would like to develop these skills as soon as possible as they will not only allow me to further my career in my current job but I will also be able to use the skills during my PGCE training to lead the class and teaching assistants that I would be working with.
4. Skills	I would like to develop my skills when working with children with additional needs.	I would work with the Additional needs co-ordinator in our school to gain as much	The Additional needs co-ordinator as well as training such as Autism awareness with	I would work with the additional

Working with children with additional needs.	This is because more and more children with additional needs are being recognised and I would like the ability to work effectively to support them.	information as I can. As well as this, I will go on training to develop my knowledge and develop my skills in supporting children with additional needs.	Lindsay Haywood at the civic centre. I have also already undertaken training with the Ed-psych from our flying start which provided lots of ways to identify children with additional needs and how to put things in place to support them.	needs co-ordinator as soon as possible to gain knowledge about identifying additional needs and the process she has to follow to support them. As well as this, the Autism Awareness course is available on 11 th July 2018 and September 20 th , 2018 and I would try to book one of these dates.
5. Values Respect.	Although I feel that I am respectful of others, I think that in early years it is very important for practitioners to respect other practitioners, families and children. Which is why I would always want to do as much as I can to ensure that I respect everyone I come in to contact with as I feel it is	Continue to enhance my professional development to ensure that I know how to handle many situations respectfully as I may be faced with lots of tough situations whilst working with children and families.	Observing more experienced staff when they deal with sensitive or tough situations to understand how I should handle similar situations when faced with them myself as it would be important for me to do my best to resolve the situation but also to ensure I respect everyone involved in the situation.	I already feel I am respectful, but I think it should be continuous provision to enhance and develop respect in certain

	important to continue to value respect for others.			situations to ensure staff are able to adapt and handle situations.
6. Values Positivity and a positive attitude.	I feel like it is important to me as an early year's practitioner to ensure that I remain positive and am a good role model for the children by having a positive attitude in front of them. Of course, there are times when I may not feel very positive, but I feel like I should put this aside when working with the children to provide high quality childcare.	Maintaining a positive attitude whilst at work and by taking part in team bonding and well-being activities with my team to ensure we have time to relax and socialise together as well as working together as I feel this would allow us to bond and become a strong team which would help me to be positive when working with them.	Team bonding activities with staff which promote well – being such as yoga. This would allow us to relax and communicate with each other about our personal lives rather than only discussing work and only socialising in work.	I would like to start this as soon as possible to ensure that I produce positivity in my work. Also, this will allow me to cope with the more stressful aspects of work easier.
7. Other? Speech and language support for children.	Since I started working in a flying start, I hear a lot about speech and language, but I do not feel like I have experienced working with the speech and language team. I have had basic training, but I feel like I would like to learn more to be able to notice if a child needs support and how to support them.	I would like to request to my manager that I go on a more in-depth speech and language course. I am interested in completing an ELKLAN course.	I will speak to my manager about any available courses or ELKLAN for me to be booked on and book any available ones as soon as possible.	The ELKLAN course is a 10-week course so once I have found an available course I would like to start as soon as possible, and it will take me 10 weeks after that to finish it.

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