

Reflection

During this reflective account I will be using Gibbs reflective model (Gibbs, 1988). The model is comprised of six distinct stages: *Description, feeling, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and action plan* (Mcloed, 2025). I have used The University of Edinburgh's reflection Toolkit (2024) notes that show that by engaging with each stage, primarily analysis and conclusion, individuals are more likely to engage critically with their own learning experience and describe these experiences (The University of Edinburgh, 2024). This is why I feel that Gibbs reflective model is the best fit for me to reflect on the experience I have had, I will be able to reflect on many areas of my experience and reflect on them positively and critically. It will encourage me to see my strengths but to also understand what I could work to improve in the future. Also, what has and hasn't worked during my journey. I can also look at where this degree may take me in the future.

Description

My personal experience leading me up to my present day starts from when I was still in school. During my years in school, I really struggled with having a fix mindset (Dweck, 1986). According to Drew (2023) having a fixed mindset is the inability to improve skills and develop personally. This is something I feel I can relate to in my school days. I always thought I couldn't do that. As time has passed, I feel this is something that has improved. As I found my way into a career that I have a passion for which is working with children, I have pushed myself to do things that I found challenging such as completing a diploma in teaching and learning (Pembrokeshire college, 2025). I then decided to complete an evening course learning how to use sign language as at the time I worked closely as a 1:1 with a child with cerebral palsy. After I had completed the following courses, I decided I would like to further my skills and complete an ELKLAN course in Speech and Language (Elkan, 2025). Once I had finished, I said to myself I was done with education for a while until the foundation degree in Inclusive Education was suggested to me. This is when I really had to see if my mindset had changed as I never thought I would be capable of completing a degree as this stage in my life and wasn't sure if it was something I could achieve. After reflecting on the achievements that I had already achieved using (Dweck, 1986) theory, I decided I could do it.

Feeling

During this time, I had a range of thoughts and feelings about taking on a foundation degree while trying to work full time and brining up a young family. I felt worried not knowing if I could achieve this, also excited at the thought of achieving something so amazing. At the time of this my eldest daughter was going through being diagnosed with ADHD and all I wanted to do was put all my effort and energy

into helping her get the support she needed at home but also at school. I feared that by taking on a degree it would take important time away from my children. What I have come to realise that in fact this has now had a positive impact on my children seeing me work towards my goals. According to Banduras Social Learning theory (1977) children learn through experience's but also through seeing another person's actions and them receiving the consequences and rewards of that choice (Mcloed, 2025). It also links to Bandura's Cognitive Model (1986) which highlights the importance of good role models. I also had that feeling of self-doubt which I know many people would have experienced telling myself "Can you really do this". With strong support from those around me, I felt confident enough to pursue the degree. I could not only prove to the people that didn't think I would be able to achieve this but also prove to myself that I can achieve my goals. This has allowed me to identify the links to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943). Reflecting on the stages that I personal moved through such as beginning at the physiological needs having everything that I needed in the way of home, food, and water. My journey really began at the **safety needs** when I got my permanent contract withing my current job role. Then progressing into **lovely and belonging** making social friendships in the workplace and branching out as my confidence began to grow such as taking on extra duties such as speech and language. Moving through to **self-esteem** as I began to obtain more experience and gain more qualifications in my field of work. This led me to **self- actualization**, where, supported and confident I realised I could complete this degree (Mcloed, 2025).

Evaluation

Reflecting on this journey I can see that I have had good and some bad points to taking on my degree. This is important part of my reflecting process as I enable myself to think critically which I have now learnt from this degree is a positive thing. My thinking critically, it has allowed me to analyse situations, make better choices and avoid mistakes (University of the People, 2020). While pursuing my degree, I gained valuable skills, including digital skills, that I now apply daily at work. I never thought I would be able to put together a video presentation with a voice over, but this is something I achieved and really enjoyed making. The skills I have learnt have increased my confidence not just in my everyday life but in my job role. For example, I have developed confidence in my digital skills by creating PowerPoint presentations as a Teaching Assistant. Also, the confidence within myself, I have realised I am capable of more than what I first thought. My confidence in taking a class has grown significantly as I have the confidence in being able to apply my teaching skills, this would apply leading the class in place of the teacher. Additionally, I regularly observe the children and lead small groups in maths and reading interventions. I am glad to say that I don't feel that I have experienced many negatives from taking on my degree. Initially, I struggled with

time management and ended up working on weekends, which reduced my family time. As time went on, I learnt how to improve my time management skills (Goby and Hiba, 2025). I have learnt that by setting goals and time slots for my work I could enjoy time with my family and get my work done in a timely manner. An example of how I achieved this was by purchasing a family planner and setting out designated time slots in the week to research and write my work.

Analysis

During this part of the reflection, I can break down the experience to analyse what I feel I have gained and what I potentially could have improved. I personally feel like my experience has changed each year that I have been taking part in this degree. The first year my confidence was at its lowest. I will always remember being given one of my first assignments where I had to make a video and add a speaking part into the video. My first thought was “I don’t know how to do this” and “where do I even start?”. As time and my skills have progressed on, I have seen my confidence grow and so have those around me. One thing I feel like I would change would be to just be more confident in myself from the start. Working alongside my peers we would talk about the marks we had received I could often find myself comparing my personal marks and putting my own marks down if they would be lower than others. I now see the ripple effect this could have on my confidence leading into the next assignment. Feeling that pressure to always do better. At times, this was reflected in my low self-esteem, which aligns with Fennell’s (1997) theory of Cognitive Behaviour regarding personal value and adequacy. This theory corresponds with my perception that others were superior to me (Rimes, Smith, and Bridge, 2023). I have also come to the realisation that I am a catalytic leader. The characteristics of a catalytic leader are using initiative to overcome issues, lead and improve without judgment (Bradt, 2025). An example of a time that I can recall being a catalytic leader would be when I tried a new de-escalation technique with a child. I realised that this technique was not going to right for this child and realised I had to think of something different that would work. I tried something new and this time it was the right fit for that individual. I find this is something that I often do daily, It could be a way of getting the attention of the class if one technique doesn’t work, we turn to trying another. I feel that by being able to do this, this has enabled me to become a problem solver. This can be linked to Vygotsky’s theory of Cognitive Development and his Zone of Proximal Development (ZDP). The way this can be linked is because when using the ZDP you are looking at the point the child is currently at and need to see what you can do to get them to where they need to be and to be able to do this you need to try things becoming a catalytic leader and also a problem solver (Paksheens55, 2025).

Conclusion

Overall, this experience has been a positive one in my life. It has given me the tools to grow from a fixed mindset to growth mindset which will help me to develop further in the future. Not just for myself but in my career and as a mother. For my children to see my confidence grow and see me trying things out of my comfort zone has had such a positive impact overall, referring to Bourdieu's theories of cultural and Social Capital (1986) as well as to Bandura's Cognitive model (1986). These demonstrate that I have become a positive role model to my children (Ramsey, 2024). I will be so proud for them to see me walk on the stage during my graduation and that is a tool I have used throughout my experience to keep my motivation alive. The skills I have learnt during my time doing this degree have also passed on to my skills within my job. Learning skills to think critically and adjust when things are not working has enabled me to become a catalytic leader. If I could change anything, I would work on my self-esteem; at times, I doubted my ability to achieve this, and although it's improved, it was still a challenge. If I could do anything differently it would have been to do my reading and research from the start as it took me a little while to figure out referencing and writing academically. If I was to do this again, I would take the time from the beginning to read and research to gain a better understanding.

Action plan

Looking at my action plan is very exciting for me. I feel that doing this degree has really opened a lot of opportunities, not just within my career but as a person. Feeling the confidence that I have now has given me the tools and skills to develop even more in the future. This could be by taking on extra duties in my current job role such as a level 3 position. My original plan was just to do this foundation degree and be done, but I have really enjoyed it. At times it has been challenging but so worth it. I feel now that my plans have changed, and I would love to go on after graduation to start my BA in Inclusive Education. As for after that I don't know where my path is headed but I know that my career in working with children will not change. I have a passion for working on children's mental health so I would love to see where this will all lead me. I feel that when I started this degree and starting at the bottom end of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) I feel much accomplishment in seeing myself more at the top of the pyramid. This is a big accomplishment for me personally and I am looking positively into the future I will have as I feel there is still much more I can give to my career. There is a possibility that I may choose to continue to my PGCE as I also have a passion for teaching and seeing the confidence within children grow as they are taught new skills. I am excited for the possibility and options that I have going into the future after I have completed my foundation degree in Inclusive Education.

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