The importance of reflection as a professional practitioner.

What is reflection?

Reflection is about exploring different points of view on an issue or problem says Brock (2014 P.2). Gillett, *et al (2009)* indicates that individuals gain insight on how to progress in the future when their outlooks, qualities and experiences are reflected upon. When reflecting it is valuable to be honest, thoughtful and detailed in order to make the most out of the reflection. Reflection is important because it allows for personal development and growth through the use of communicating with others to get their point of view as an example. As well as this reflecting is good practice for the working world because it teaches individuals how to think through their actions and understand the repercussions of them (Gillett, *et al* (2009). Reflection is something that can be carried out again and again once goals have been reached from the first cycle.

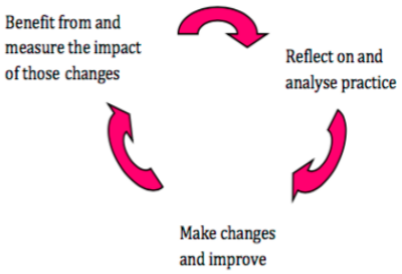
Reflective practice

Reflective practice is a style of self-judgement. In the classroom practitioners must think about why something works and why they do something a certain way. Reflective practice is suggested as important because it allows for a more structured way of breaking down thoughts and observations and recording them, resulting in it being easier to make the necessary changes for progress implies Tice (2014). Brock (2014, P.3) also agrees that reflection is undertaken in practice in order for practitioners to improve, as it helps to make the quality of learning for students better and more beneficial. This will make the parents and carers of the children in the professionals care more at ease knowing that their children are receiving high quality care that is always improving. Reflective practice also improves communication and team work within a setting. In a setting reflective practice needs to be modelled from the management all the way down to the staff working with the children every day. This ensures that all staff are on the same page for improving the quality and outcomes for the setting.

Qualities of a reflective practitioner from the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (2016)

A reflective Practitioner takes responsibility. This means that the practitioner will be honest with themselves by saying if an activity does not work for example. A good reflective practitioner also acknowledges their weaknesses but also honours their strengths. Reflection is not only about the weaknesses, it is also about realising that something went well too. A reflective practitioner will also think about different ways of teaching. For example, in my setting the children do not really go to our writing table, so the class teacher recognised this and then made the activity on the writing table more fun the following week and the children loved it. A reflective practitioner will also attempt new teaching styles and methods to help children improve. Practioners who reflect should always be thinking about improving their practice in the future. For example, practitioners could reflect on what courses they could do to help improve the quality of their practice.

(Source: Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (2016)



Reflection in an early-years setting

Professional practitioners in the early years are always busy but Lindon, (2012 p.6) implies that reflection that is undertaken at quieter times must show in the practitioners' actions in the busier times like in the classroom. PACEY (2016) says that one way practitioners in an early years setting can reflect is by talking to peers in the work place. This is because in a setting like a school working together with other practitioners and reflecting on each others practice will allow for them to bounce ideas off one another and offer support. As well as talking to peers, practitioners can ask the children in their care what they think about a certain lesson for example as a form of reflection. Children are a really good source to learn from as they are the ones actually doing the work, so if they said that a maths lesson was boring the practitioner can learn from them to make It more interesting and enjoyable in the future. However, on the other hand if the children really enjoyed a lesson by being engaged the whole time the practitioner then knows that the lesson is successful and to therefore use the lesson again in the future. Parents can also be used as a form of reflection within a setting because children may go home and tell their parents what they enjoyed doing in school that day. This is useful information for the professional practitioner to reflect on because if multiple children go home and say they enjoyed an activity they know to include it in future planning for the following year. Another form of reflection can be done through peer observations. Peer observations in an early-years setting like a school can be beneficial for practitioners to receive constructive feedback. Sometimes practitioners need an outsider's view in order to see what needs improving. Research shows that when peer observations have been succsessfull it has a result of practitioners professional practice improving. Peer-observations as a type of reflection allows for practitioners to have the chance to share ideas, discuss challenges and improve the quality of learning, sourced from A practical guide for teachers. (Victoria State Government (2018). However, according to Lindon, (2012 p.10 - p.12) there are some obstacles with some professionals becoming a reflective practitioner these include that some practitioners do not like change, more experienced practitioners are stuck in their old ways and also some practitioners do not take criticism well. Nonetheless, reflection is important in practice to ensure high quality learning for the children and to improve personal development.

Reflection theories

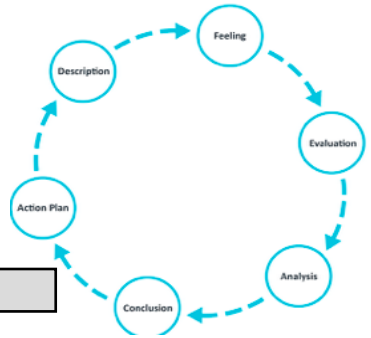
On the whole all the models of reflection have the same ideas, so it is therefore down to the individual to choose which one they use. For example, practitioners could use Gibb's Reflective Cycle to help them with reflecting as it is one of the most well-known theories. Gibb's theory also takes into consideration feelings which some models do not. Kolb's reflective model could also be good for practitioners as this theory is based on learning from experience and that is exactly what practitioners do in the early years' states Lindon (2012 P.67). The Schon reflective theory can also be a good model for practitioners because it is based on reflecting in action and reflecting on action. The reflection in action is key for practitioners because it allows for improvement in quality immediately. Nonetheless the reflection on action is also important for practitioners because working in the early years, practitioners are always busy working with the children or observing them. So, in quieter times like when they go home they can reflect on how they could have dealt with a situation differently and put it into practice the next day. Sourced from libguides hull (2022)
The University of Edinburgh (2021) says that reflection models are one of the simplest ways to start the reflection process. This is because reflection models give a step by step guide to help aid an individual's thinking in the right direction.

Kolb's reflective model (1984)

Kolb created a model that demonstrates the system of experimental learning though a cycle of 4 stages. The stages are: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. Kolb created this model of experimental learning so that the lessons learned will be more valuable and remembered.
The concrete experience is the starting point for this reflection model and could be something that occurred on a normal day in practice. The next step is reflection observation, this is where a practitioner would take the time to rethink the situation through. This stage of the cycle can be more complicated or fast it all depends on the concrete experience. The third stage of abstract conceptualisation is where practitioners will start to realise what they have learned from the experience. The last stage of active experimentation is where a practitioner puts into action what has been learned by deciding what to do differently next time. (Lindon, 2012, P.65-66)

Gibb's Reflective Cycle- Gibbs, G (1988)

Gibb's Reflective cycle was created in 1988 to help create an organised way to learning through experiences sourced from the University of Edinburgh (2020). It is also one of the most recognised models of reflection. The cycle has 6 steps; description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and action Plan.
To reflect using Gibb's Theory individual's must:
The first step of Gibb's reflective model is a description of the experience. This is where practitioners would look back at the situation that took place. Next Gibb's model states that the practitioners must now think about their feelings towards the situation. For example, were the feelings positive or negative. Following this the practitioner must now evaluate both the good and bad points of the experience that occurred. The practitioner then needs to analyse by comprehending the experience on a whole. The next step in the cycle is to conclude. To do this the practitioner must think about what they have learned from the experience and consider any possible changes for if the situation is experienced again in the future. Finally, a plan of action is required so the practitioner knows exactly how to comprehend the circumstance more effectively in the future.



(Source: Gibb's reflective cycle sourced from University of Edinburgh (2020).

The ERA Cycle

The University of Cambridge (2019) Explains the ERA Cycle written by Jasper (2013). The ERA cycle theory is one of the easier theories to follow on reflection as it has 3 steps: experience, reflection and action, which is what 'ERA' stands for. This theory states that in order to start to reflect the individual must first start with either a positive or negative experience that has happened. The cycle indicates that once an experience has been made the individual will be able to reflect on it, gather thoughts and feeling and then think about the next step. Once the individual has completed the previous two steps they are now able to act on what they have gathered. It is important to note that every individua will have a different outcome depending on their own experiences. The cycle then repeats.

Conclusion

To conclude reflection is important to undertake as suggested by Gillet, *et.al (2009)* and will be used all throughout life both in work and outside work. It is suggested that reflection is important in settings because it encourages practitioners to be more aware of their strengths and weaknesses and gives them the opportunity to evaluate what went well and what they need to change. The result of reflecting on practice it is ensuring that the children cared for in the setting are having the highest quality learning and care. As well as this, reflective practitioners in setting also help promote good communication and teamwork in their settings. Remember that when reflecting a practitioner should be honest with themselves in order for the reflection to be effective.

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