

PART 1

What do I know already:	I've acquired skills in graphic design, illustration, fluency in Bengali and English, IT knowledge, and reading Arabic. I've gained experience in one-on-one and group teaching, working with children and teenagers, and improving my management, leadership, and teamwork abilities.			
What do I want to develop:	Looking ahead, I aim to enhance my Arabic reading skills, improve as a learning support assistant, refine my pedagogical practices, gain additional professional qualifications, and upgrade my cooking skills for the family while maintaining a healthier fitness and well-being routine.			
Objective	Actions (How will I achieve this objective/ what needs to be done?)	Resources (What support and resources are needed to achieve this objective?)	Target Date for achieving objective	Success criteria (How will I know I have achieved this goal, how will I review this?)
<i>Improve my cooking skills for the benefit of my family.</i>	- Experiment with new recipes and cooking techniques regularly. - Take a cooking class or follow online workshops. - Maintain a food journal to track progress and family preferences.	- Set a budget for cooking classes and or ingredients. - Access to cooking courses via masterclass and online tutorials available through youtube. - Allocate time on weekends and when jessie is in work, for regular practice and cooking experimentation.	- Ongoing with regular milestones such as number of meals cooked celebrations. 10, 25, 50... gamify achievements.	- Prepare a variety of dishes and cuisines and list them to review what I have made which is noteworthy. - Positive feedback and appreciation from my family. - Use reflective journal to record notes on my cooking experience and journey, whilst reviewing to see progress.
<i>Establish healthier and more consistent fitness and health habits.</i>	- Join puregym. - Aim to attend the gym attend at least twice a week. - Maintain a food diary to track macros and make healthier food selections.	- Gym membership. - Budget for the monthly gym membership. - Time dedicated to daily exercise and meal planning.	Over the next 6 months.	- Notice general improvement in health and levels of energy and be able to participate in more physical activities. - Notice improvements in physical appearance

				towards the end of the 6-month period through before and after photos. • Consistently follow the exercise routine and maintain a balanced diet. • Monitor progress through exercise repetition, volume and set data.
<i>Refine and improve my pedagogical practice and obtain additional qualifications to improve in my current role.</i>	• Enrol BA degree course in early years education and care. • Seek mentorship or routine advice and feedback from experienced educators. • Use assignment submission feedback for future assignments.	• Budget for course fees and materials. • Time allocated for evening lectured and independent study and learning.	• Over the next 18 months.	• Implement current learning practice and or theories in daily practice effectively. • Attain module assignment feedback and grades. • Positive feedback from peers and supervisors. • Final degree qualification.
<i>Improve my reading proficiency in the Arabic language.</i>	• Enrol in an Arabic language course to build a strong foundation. • Allocate at least 30 minutes daily to read Arabic texts. • Maintain a vocabulary journal to track progress.	• Arabic reading materials such as books, newspapers, and online resources. • Time set aside for daily reading practice.	• Within 12 months.	• Read and understand Arabic texts with ease. • Maintain vocabulary journal. • Regularly review and reflect on progress.

PART 2

Understanding Reflective Practice in Early Years

Reflective practice is a pivotal aspect of professional development in early years education. This briefing paper explores its significance and the models shaping this process.

What is Reflection and Reflective Practice

Reflection and reflective practice, as articulated by Brock (2015) and Finlay (2008), encompass expansive concepts with subjective definitions. Their interpretation hinges upon how individuals perceive and apply these concepts within a specific context.

As highlighted by Finlay (2008), reflective practice is widely acknowledged as the process of learning through one's own experiences both professionally and or personally. This typically involves examining the assumptions that underlie everyday practices and often requires individuals to be self-aware and critically evaluating their responses in practical situations.

Reflection and reflective practice are integral to the continual development of professionals, serving as foundational principles across various fields, particularly in education, healthcare, and social services. They constitute a core component of professional practice (Moon, 2004).

Reflective practice within the context of teaching is crucial. It enhances individual's self-awareness, problem-solving skills, and confidence, all of which are essential for providing quality care and education to young children. It fosters innovative approaches and enhances

their effectiveness in promoting early childhood development (Cambridge Assessment International Education (no date).

The Theory of Reflective Practice

John Dewey and Donald Schön, seminal figures in reflective practice development, significantly influence its contemporary understanding (The Open University, 2023).

John Dewey:

Dewey (1933) establishes the fundamental framework for reflective thinking in education, highlighting the significance of critical thinking and its role in problem-solving and learning. He advocates active engagement with experiences, scrutiny, and the derivation of conclusions to inform and enhance future actions. Dewey's work underscores reflective practice as an active, transformative process enriching learning and adaptability.

Donald Schön:

Schön's work (1983) expands understanding by introducing "reflection in action" and "reflection on action." "Reflection in action" unfolds in real-time decision-making, drawing from "knowing in action" – the intuitive knowledge practitioners employ during active engagement. In contrast, "reflection on action" involves post-event analysis and learning. Schön emphasizes that reflective practice is a dynamic, ongoing process vital for professionals to effectively navigate complex and unpredictable situations.

Dewey's theories highlight critical thinking, active problem-solving, rational processes, and the scrutiny of underlying beliefs (Brock, 2015).

While Schön's theories centre on establishing coherence between practice, knowledge, and

experience through "knowing in action," reflection in action, reflection on action, and the ongoing refinement of understanding through reflective discourse and evaluation (Brock, 2015).

These theories underpin reflective practice, driving learning, problem-solving, and professional growth across various fields.

Why is Reflective Practice Important to Early Years Practice

Hallet (2013, pp. 24,25) emphasizes that a primary objective of reflective practice should be to enrich the experiences of children and their families. When practitioners engage in reflection, they gain the opportunity to enhance the provision and practice they provide by making well-informed evaluations regarding the effectiveness of their work with children.

Furthermore, Hallet underscores that children's wellbeing is strongly linked to how practitioners draw on their professional knowledge and experiences. They use reflection to learn, adapt, and improve the services for children and families, all while advancing their own professional skills as early years practitioners.

As Brock (2015, p. 25) concluded, reflective practice is a valuable process for practitioners, allowing them to navigate challenges, improve their knowledge and practice, stay current in a rapidly changing field, and ultimately enhance the quality of care and education they provide to young children. Reflection is not just an isolated task but a continuous learning journey that brings personal and professional growth.

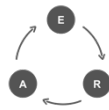
Models of Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is widely supported through reflective models.

Here are four key models, each highlighting the cyclic nature of reflective thinking:

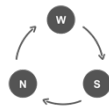
ERA Cycle (Jasper, 2013):

- Experience
- Reflection
- Action



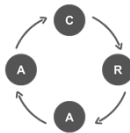
Driscoll's "What Model" (2006, p. 44,45):

- What?
- So what?
- Now what?



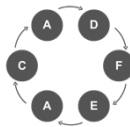
Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984):

- Concrete Experience
- Reflective Observation
- Abstract Conceptualization
- Active Experimentation



Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988, p. 49,50):

- Description
- Feelings
- Evaluation
- Analysis
- Conclusion
- Action Plan



These models illustrate the continuous cyclical nature of reflection, fostering growth, learning, and improvement. Additionally, they provide structural framework to the reflective process (Cambridge University Libraries, no date) and (Moon, 2004).

Analysis of Two Models of Reflection: Driscoll's "What Model" vs. Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

Driscoll's "What Model," rooted in Terry Borton's approach (1970), offers a simple framework for reflection, based on three core questions: "What? So What? Now What?" (The University of Edinburgh, 2020). These questions underpin the analysis and development of insights from practitioners' experiences, spanning three stages, each requiring critical thinking (Gladd, 2020).

The initial step involves describing the situation or experience to establish context, providing a clear understanding of the matter at hand. Subsequently, practitioners reflect, pondering "So what?" to extract lessons. The "Now What?" stage prompts consideration of actions resulting from the reflection.

In contrast, Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (Gibbs, 1988) is notably more complex, comprising six interconnected stages: "Description, Feelings, Evaluation, Analysis, Conclusion, and Action Plan." These stages encourage deep analytical contemplation of experiences (Main, 2023).

Gibbs' model starts with the "Description" stage, where individuals objectively recount the experience, addressing fundamental questions such as "What happened?" The "Feelings" stage records emotional responses, both positive and negative. The "Evaluation" phase comprehensively assesses the experience,

identifying what worked and what didn't. "Analysis" deepens understanding, drawing on literature and professional knowledge. In the "Conclusion" stage, individuals determine what could have been done differently and extract valuable lessons. Finally, the "Action Plan" outlines future courses of action for similar situations.

In summary, Driscoll's "What Model" offers a straightforward framework, ideal for beginners in reflective practice, providing clear direction. However, it may be viewed as somewhat rigid for those familiar with reflective practice or complex experiences.

On the other hand, Gibbs' Reflective Cycle is notably more comprehensive, allowing in-depth analysis and planning, but may appear daunting for newcomers.

Takeaways

When addressing potential barriers to reflective practice, both models can help overcome them, offering structure, a clear starting point, and enabling a comprehensive situational assessment. The choice between these models should match the individual's experience level and specific reflective needs.

In summary, reflective practice is a cornerstone of professional development in early years education, empowering practitioners to enhance the quality of care and education for both children and their families. The selection of a reflective model should align with the individual's level of experience and specific professional requirements, each offering a distinct approach that contributes to personal and collective growth in the ongoing learning journey for excellence in early years care and education.

PART 3

The significance of different aspects of professional practice and why these are important in meeting the individual and inclusive needs of children.

Introduction

In the context of early childhood education and care, professional practice plays a pivotal role in addressing the unique and inclusive needs of children. This essay explores the importance of key elements in professional practice, including values, communication, safeguarding, partnership, observation, and the UNCRC principles, all of which are critical in nurturing children's well-being and success.

The Significance of Values in Professional Practice

A value-centered approach is pivotal for professional practitioners, forming the foundations of the "optimum practitioner" (Gasper, 2015). This approach encompasses key attributes, including specialised training, a commitment to upholding practice standards, and a dedication to service that goes beyond personal interests (Perez, 2019). Gasper (2015) highlights that these strong values, when complemented by professional knowledge and qualifications, define the "optimum practitioner."

In a case study by Maron Dowling (2014), emphasis is placed on recognising the diverse values children may encounter in educational settings and family environments. This case study serves as an illustrative example of the challenges and opportunities that arise when values from different domains intersect.

Within educational settings, practitioners shoulder the responsibility of nurturing children's values to align with those of the setting and universal positive values. This duty is exemplified in Wang Hoi's experience, where a young child navigates the varying expectations and values of both family and the educational environment.

Respect, as outlined in the 'Code of Ethics' (Early Education, 2011), is a cornerstone value in this process. It involves respecting the family's culture and perspectives while collaboratively establishing shared expectations in line with the setting's values. Effective communication and collaboration are indispensable when reconciling differing viewpoints, emphasizing the importance of enhancing parental understanding to better support their children.

The Significance of Communication and Relationships in Professional Practice for Meeting Children's Needs

Communication and relationships are foundational elements of professional practice in early childhood education, playing a vital role in meeting children's needs (WJEC CBAC Ltd, 2019). Effective communication stands at the core of understanding and addressing the ever evolving and diverse needs of children while fostering a positive learning environment.

Firstly, communication serves as the linchpin of collaboration among professionals, parents, and caregivers. It facilitates the exchange of crucial information regarding children's developmental progress, challenges, and specific requirements. This collaborative approach ensures that all stakeholders are aligned, working together seamlessly to provide the best support and care for children.

Proficient communication skills also enable practitioners to enhance children's language development more effectively (The Little Dreamers Nursery, 2023). This improvement can significantly boost children's self-esteem and self-assurance, allowing them to express themselves more clearly. This, in turn, paves the way for more effective relationship building.

Furthermore, relationships built on trust and effective communication between practitioners and children are essential for children's social and emotional development (birth-to-5-matters, 2021). A robust, supportive connection cultivates a sense of security, empowering children to express themselves, seek guidance, and acquire vital life skills.

The Importance of In-Depth Knowledge and Understanding in Professional Practice, Including Safeguarding

In the realm of safeguarding within early childhood education, possessing in-depth knowledge and understanding is of paramount importance. This necessitates an unwavering commitment to continuous learning and development, facilitated by Continuing Professional Development (CPD) (Social Care Wales, 2017). CPD empowers practitioners to remain informed about best practices, legal requirements, and emerging safeguarding issues, underscoring its critical role in ensuring children's safety and well-being in educational settings.

CPD stands as a fundamental aspect of professional practice, ensuring that practitioners maintain their competence, confidence, and alignment with current standards. It equips practitioners to bridge skill gaps, enrich their knowledge, and cultivate confidence, setting them apart as experts in their field. This dedication to ongoing learning and development empowers practitioners to

pursue their career aspirations and adeptly navigate evolving environments. Furthermore, CPD drives enhanced outcomes in professional practice, highlighting its significance in fostering excellence (Social Care Wales, 2017).

Mandy Duncan, (Hayes, 2023 p. 424), stresses the importance of practitioners keeping current with safeguarding policies, relevant legislation, and guidance. She also encourages practitioners to engage in ongoing reflection on safeguarding and general practice, often collaborating with colleagues. This commitment to staying informed and reflective is vital in creating a child-centric learning environment, highlighting the essential role of in-depth knowledge in understanding, and addressing children's unique needs.

The Importance of Partnership and Multi-Agency Working in Professional Practice

Effective partnership and multi-agency collaboration between early years practitioners and parents are pivotal (Hayes, 2023, p. 380). Research from Birth to 5 Matters (2021, p. 28) emphasizes that children's future success is predominantly influenced by the quality of their home learning environment, irrespective of early childhood setting quality. Involving parents in their children's education is the foremost factor in promoting children's excellence, even in challenging circumstances. Benefits arise when practitioners and families collaboratively devise strategies to support children at home and in educational settings, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of each child's needs and tailored support.

The NSPCC (no date) emphasizes the vital role of multi-agency working in child safeguarding. Effective collaboration and information sharing among practitioners from different agencies are essential for a thorough understanding of a child's situation. Communication, adherence to organizational policies, teamwork, trust-building, and resolving differing opinions are key elements in providing coordinated support to children and families. Regular training and supervision support reflective practice and professional growth.

Multi-agency collaboration has substantial benefits. It alleviates professional work pressure, fosters a positive work environment, and enhances the ability to manage demanding roles. Sharing experiences across agencies empowers practitioners to improve service quality and provide exceptional support. Collaboration creates a robust foundation for successful outcomes in children and youth, ensuring comprehensive support plans and preventing uncoordinated agencies (Training express, 2023).

How the Observation and Planning Cycle Shapes Professional Practice and Meets Children's Needs

As emphasized by West Sussex County Council (2021), regular observations play a pivotal role in ensuring child-centered planning and tailored activities that address each child's unique needs. This process is crucial for recognizing developmental milestones and individual preferences, ultimately informing practice, and creating an environment conducive to effective learning and growth.

The planning cycle is a continuous process that encompasses observation, assessment, and planning. It commences with the careful observation of children through attentive listening and watching. Subsequently, assessment takes place, considering each child's development and learning needs, with valuable insights also drawn from parental input. The final step involves planning, which focuses on determining the next steps in children's development. This step incorporates observations and assessments, providing a solid foundation for supporting individual growth and learning (West Sussex County Council, 2021).

Observation and the planning cycle are essential for effective professional practice with children. Observations provide valuable insights for informed assessments. Assessments guide practitioners in making well-informed decisions regarding a child's progress and needs, influencing future planning.

This approach ensures thorough observations, impacting the development of individualized or group-based plans. Practitioners are better equipped to support each child's well-being and optimal development. In summary, observation and the planning cycle are integral to professional practice, ensuring children's unique needs are met (Department of Education, 2023).

The Impact of UNCRC Principles on Professional Practice and Its Significance

According to UNICEF (2019), the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) hold a pivotal role in guiding professional practice. These principles, which encompass non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the right to survival and development, and the views of the child, contribute to an overarching attitude centered on children's rights. They promote the idea that children are equal human beings, emphasizing their intrinsic value.

These principles ensure children receive equal value, necessary protection, and support to enjoy their rights fully. UNICEF's perspective highlights the ethical and ideological dimensions the UNCRC principles add, underlining their importance in professional practice. Moreover, as noted by Cathy Nutbrown (2021), UNCRC principles have practical implications. They compel practitioners to ensure equal treatment of all children, regardless of their background, providing necessary support for their well-being.

These principles underscore the importance of respecting each child's unique background and nationality, creating inclusive and culturally sensitive environments. They emphasize the provision of nutritious food, access to medical care, and protection from harm. In summary, the UNCRC principles guide professional practice in early years settings, ensuring children's rights are upheld, and their well-being is promoted in a tangible and meaningful way.

Conclusion

In conclusion, these foundational elements of professional practice are integral in meeting the individual and inclusive needs of children in early childhood education. Values, communication, in-depth knowledge, collaborative partnership, observation, and adherence to the UNCRC principles collectively ensure that every child receives the support and care they require. These aspects are fundamental in fostering children's growth, safety, and well-being. Recognizing and embracing these core components is essential for early childhood practitioners, as they hold the key to unlocking each child's full potential, regardless of their unique needs. These elements are essential for preparing children for a more inclusive and promising future.

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