

The Professional Practitioner (ECEY4009)

Part 1

So far I have learnt what you need to be to be a professional practitioner. I believe that it is important that you are a role model to those that you work with, knowledgeable so that you are teaching the children the correct information and are able to build strong relationships and communication skills with children, staff and different agencies who are connected to the setting. Whilst working within an early years setting, as a professional practitioner it is important to know the policies and procedures that the setting has in place. Also within this module, I have learnt about the rights of children. All children have the right to food, homes and medical care. Along with the rights to education, freedom of thought/speech and play.

I would like to develop my understanding of being a professional practitioner and explore different theorists and what they believe is a professional practitioner and why it is important in the early years. I would also like to explore more ways that I could be the best practitioner I can be in my workplace.

Objective / Gwrthrychol	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>To achieve my BA in Early Years Education and Care</i>	In order to achieve this objective, it is essential that I work my hardest throughout the two year degree and always hand in work on time.	Resources that are needed to achieve this objective are full access to the University 'moodle' page and support throughout each module from all lecturers.	My target date for achieving this objective is May 2025.	I will know I have achieved this when the two years are completed and I get my final overall grade for the course.
<i>To achieve a Team Teach qualification in how to professionally and safely restrain a child with learning and behavioural difficulties</i>	To achieve this qualification I will need to go on the training course to learn all aspects of the training.	Resources I will need is support from the course leaders and handouts from the course in order for me to refresh my memory in the future.	My target date for achieving this object is by the end of October 2023.	When I receive a certificate of completion upon finishing the course, this will be an indication of achieving this objective.

<i>To continue developing my overall academic skills</i>	For me to achieve this objective, I will need to continue to work on the different areas of my academic skills that I learnt in the academic skills module and develop them further.	In order to do this, I will need to continue to make sure every assignment that I complete is done to the best standard whilst using all the skills acquired in the first module of this degree.	My target date for the end of this objective is by the end of my degree is May 2025.	Once I have completed my degree, I will then know if I have achieved this objective. I will not just develop my academic skills throughout this degree, but throughout any future jobs too.
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What is reflection and reflective practise?

(Health and Care Professions Council, 2021) talks about how reflection helps a practitioner gain insight into their professional practise. (Brock, 2015, p.7) backs this statement up by saying what types of ways reflection can be done to gain insight. This can be done through portfolios or learning journals along with reflective evaluations. She speaks about how reflection and reflective practice are core values for professionals and within professional training.

Sewell (2021) uses a quote by Donald Schon which says "reflective practice is the ability to reflect on one's actions so as to engage in a process of continuous learning". The meaning behind this statement is that practitioners are able to continue learning after reflecting on what they have done.

Why is reflective practise important to EY practise?

In an article by the Professional Association for Childcare And Early Years (2016), they say that reflective practise is important to the early years as it will benefit all children within the setting as well as both parents and carers.

Early Years Careers (2015) talks about how reflective practise helps enable the best possible care for children. It allows practitioners to study previous activities and make them more challenging for children.

Both of these articles are written similarly as the first one talks about how beneficial reflective practise is for children, parents and carers. The second article then talks about how reflective practise helps develop and challenge children, which is also beneficial for both children and parents.

The theory of reflective practise:

Throughtout reflective practise, there are many theories which theorists have created about what they believe reflective practise is. Theorists which will be looked at is John Dewey, Donald Schon, Kolb and Boud. (edshare.soton.ac.uk, n.d.)

John Dewey's theory is about reflection as a rationalised process. Dewey (1933) believes that reflection is a way of learning and not just a way of reflecting on an event. Dewey also believes that reflection can also be a way of making sense of any situations that practitioners found complex. During his theory, he implied that reflection for learning should be remembering the event and then asking questions about why the event happened and what could be done to give a different outcome.

Donald Schon's theory is about reflection and professional development. Schon claimed that reflection can open up hidden knowledge. That knowledge reinforces what practitioners do. By reflecting, it can help practitioners improve their daily practice.

Kolb's theory is the experimental learning cycle. Kolb (1975) looked at the basics areas of reflection and then went on to create a learning cycle framework. He identified four areas of the framework which are concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. Kolb's learning cycle got simplified by Pedler in 2001 to something happened, what happened?, so what? And what now? This is very similar to Rolfe's model.

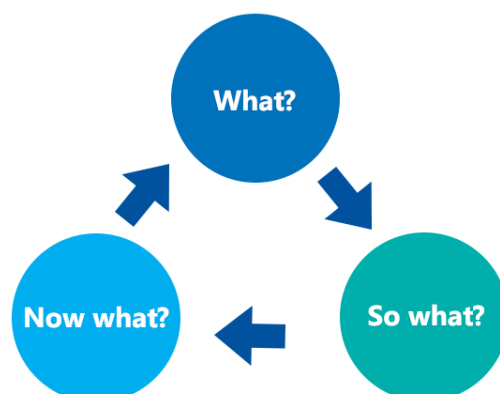
The final theory is by Boud which is about reflection and emotion. Boud's theory challenges Schon's theory by saying that for reflection to be effective, emotions need to be thought about. In the same theory, Boud (1985) also spok about how emotions can have an impact on the way individuals recall situations.

Gibbs' model



Rolfe's model

Image: (www.google.com, n.d.)



Analysis of models – compare/contrast/pros/cons:

Gibbs' model of reflective theory consists of six different parts. Description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusions and action plan which will be looked in to in more depth in this section. The model offers a framework of experiences and allows practitioners to learn and plan from things that went well or not so well. The model allows practitioners to describe the experience, voice their feelings and thoughts on the experience, evaluate the experience, analyse the situation, conclude what they have learned and build and action plan for how they could deal with similar situations. (The University of Edinburgh, 2020)

Another model of reflective theory is by Rolfe. His model is based on the three questions of What? So what? And now what? During the first section of the model, it allows practitioners to question what was good or bad about the experience, what they were trying to achieve and what was their role in the situation. In the second section of the model, it allows practitioners to think about what their new understanding of the situation is, what was going through their mind as they acted and what did they base their actions on. The final part to the model allows

Gibbs' model of reflective theory has similarities to Rolfe's model as both models allow practitioners to reflect and evaluate on their individual situations. University of Edinburgh (2020) talks about Gibbs' model and how individuals build action plans for similar situations in the future based on their evaluations and reflections. Likewise, University of Cumbria (2016), also talks about how Rolfe's model ensures practitioners reflect on their actions and what they could do better in future situations.

A contrast of both models is that Gibbs' model is much more detailed and goes into more depth than Rolfe's model. Gibbs' model includes an in-depth and step by step analysis of how a practitioner could deal with a situation. Whereas, Rolfe's model may be seen as not as in-depth and may not show a clear picture as to how a practitioner could effectively reflect. The above statements can be backed up by analysing the images above.

Conclusion

During this section of the assignment, I learnt how important reflective practise is within the early years, what several theorists' views are on reflective practise and about the models of both Gibbs and Rolfe. The theories are very detailed and show a clear picture of what reflective practise is. The theory which I enjoyed learning about the most is Kolb's. This is because Kolb created a clear learning framework which is full of detail on reflection and easy to understand. The model which I enjoyed learning about the most is Gibbs. This is similar to Kolb's reason as it offers an in-depth view of how reflection can be analysed in a professional manner.

Part 3

The significance of professional practise and why it is important in meeting the needs of children.

Professional practice is when a professional demonstrates knowledge, expertise, skills, qualities and values and beliefs with a setting. (*Professional Practice in an Educational Setting. SQA 2009*). In my personal opinion, professional practice is when individuals carry out their role effectively and confidently whilst working in a calm and appropriate manner. Some examples of professional practice are peer observations, self-evaluations and reflection as well as undertaking the relevant training courses for a particular role. (*Professional Learning. General Teaching Council for Scotland*)

A professional is someone who has the qualities and skills to connect with other skilled and trained team members in an effective, organised and serious manner. Another way of describing a professional is someone who has the type of job that is respected because it involves a high level of education and training. Both of these descriptions come from the Cambridge Dictionary online. (*Meaning of a professional. Cambridge Dictionary*). In order to be a professional, (Christian, 2016) has developed a number of key fundamentals which need to be followed. Some examples of these are having a responsibility, accountability, direct working relationships, morality and ethical constraints.

There are many values that are needed as a professional practitioner. To be a professional practitioner within a workplace, you need to have knowledge, be a role model to those around you, be an open minded individual, be consistent, have excellent communication skills and know and understand the policies and procedures of the setting. All of the values which have been mentioned above are important to professional practise as they are building blocks of what is needed in order to be professional within your role.

Communication and relationships are important to professional practise and meeting the needs of a child as each practitioner needs to know the vital information about the child that they are working with. Whether that be communicating and building relationships with parents and carers or working with different agencies. According to an article by GOV.UK, it states that “developing relationships through communication and sharing experiences supports personal, social and emotional development”. (*GOV.uk, 2023*). Developing these allow practitioners to engage and build trust between both parents and carers as well as the child. This will enable the professional to have a clear overview of the child’s needs and what can be done to support them. Along with building communication and relationships with parents, having strong communication and relationships with work colleagues is also important so that information can be shared effectively and correctly.

Having in-depth knowledge and understanding is important for any professional practitioner as they need to have a clear and wide understanding of what they do within their positions. For example, a practitioner who works in the early years settings needs to know about every policy and procedure that is in place within the setting. One major policy that an early years practitioner would need to have sound knowledge and understanding of is the safeguarding policy. Having knowledge and understanding of the safeguarding policy is very important as the practitioner needs to know how to report a safeguarding issue, who the designated safeguarding officer to report to is and what the next steps are to safeguard a child.

Multi-agency and partnership working is vital for professional practitioners as agencies work together to support each other to get to the best overall outcome. In an article by NSPCC Learning, they say that "it is vital that practitioners work together to gain a full overview of a child's situation and have a co-ordinated approach to support". (*Multi-agency Working. NSPCC Learning, 2023*). This statement is saying that in order to know what the child's situation entails and how to support them, practitioners from different agencies must work together to find the best way to support the child and their needs. Also, within the NSPCC Learning article, it states how important information sharing and collaborating between agencies is. This is so that each professional who works with the child can fully understand the risks and how to keep the child safe. (Express and Abhay, 2023) name a number of professionals that work together in a multi-agency team. These are professionals such as social workers, physiotherapists, community nurses, occupational therapist and GPs. These practitioners will usually work within the early years setting regularly to support an early year's practitioner. The professionals mentioned above also work in partnerships with settings to help resolve any safeguarding issues which may have arisen.

The observation, assessment and planning cycle is an assessment of all child activity. This is carried out by the practitioner where they assess a child based on their learning and growing. This then leads on to planning the next steps for parents and how they can support and extend the child's learning. This information has come from an online book named 'Birth To 5 Matters'. During the observation stage, professional practitioners will observe the child as they interact with their activities and reach out to parents about what their child does at home. This part of the cycle could be seen as the most important part as it forms the base for the rest of the cycle. The assessment stage is where the practitioner reflects on the observation that they have carried out on the child which leads on to understanding the child. The final part of the cycle is the planning stage. This is where the practitioner will pull every bit of information that they have gathered from the observation and assessment stage to decide how is best to support and teach the child. (*Observation, assessment and planning. Birth to 5 Matters. 2021*). It is essential that every practitioner gets this cycle correct so that they can plan the appropriate development for each individual child which suits their own needs.

As part of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), there are 45 articles. Article 1 to 42 are based on the child whereas articles 43 to 45 are based on how adults and the Government work together in a partnership to make sure that all children's rights are met. All 45 articles are important for the children but a few that will be looked at below are articles 3, 28 and 31. Article 3 is about the best interests of the child. This article is important for professional practitioners as each practitioner needs to ensure that what they are teaching the children, has the best interests of the child in mind. The second article to look at is article 28 which is about the child's right to education. Every child has the right to full education and as a practitioner, it is vital that they follow this to ensure that every child has the education that they need and deserve. The third and final of the articles which will be looked at is article 31. This article is all about leisure, play and culture. Every child has the right to play and take part in a variety of activities which may include different cultural and artistic activities. It is important that professional practitioners know the importance of all of the UNCRC articles in their role and the ones I have mentioned above are a few of some of the ones that I use daily in my role. (UNICEF, 2023)

To conclude, I have looked in depth at many different sources which promote professional practise and how each one is important to meeting the needs of the children. The sources all talk about communication, relationships, knowledge, understanding, multi-agency working and the observation and planning cycle which are important values that every professional

needs. Each area that was looked at relates to my role as a professional practitioner in my school setting. There is so much importance behind the values of professional practice which shapes the early years. The part of the assignment I enjoyed researching about was the rights that every child has within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This is because there are many children's rights within the UNCRC which I did not have a full understanding of before starting my research. After researching each one in depth, I have a much clearer understanding of what each right is about.

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