

## Reflections on Early Years Practice

### EAEE5002C

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## Element 1

Reflection is defined by Appleby (2010) as 'the ability to think critically and creatively' (pp. 8). Reed and Canning (2010, pp. 1) go as far as saying that 'reflecting on practice underpins the work of early years practice'. Reflection is linked closely to Dewey (1910) who first merged the idea of reflection to action and described critical thinking as a reflective thought in practice. Schön (1987) considers two types of reflection: Reflection in action and reflection on action. Reflection in action is reflecting upon the event at the time and reflection on action is reflecting upon the action after it is over and making changes for the future. Using the understanding of reflection from Schön and Dewey, many theorists have developed their own models of reflection in order to visualise the process of reflection for practitioners. Rolfe, Freshwater, & Jasper (2001) uses the model 'What? So what? Now what?' to encourage reflection and ensure a plan moving forward. Gibbs (1988) follows a systematic model looking at feelings as well as the event that occurred. These two models both have advantages and disadvantages when used in practices as well as similarities which will be explored throughout.

Rolfe, Freshwater, & Jasper (2001) argues that their reflective model asks 3 stages of questions that then lead the practitioner to critically reflect on their practice effectively. Chen et al. (2011) also argues that reflective practice requires guidance especially when the practitioner is new to the idea of reflection; the questions suggested by Rolfe, Freshwater, & Jasper (2001) model would appear to support this notion. The idea of answering questions in a written format is believed to trigger and prompt reflection and, in turn, teach the practitioner (Davis, 2006). Practitioners who are required to answer questions often feel prompted to look at aspects of reflection that they had not thought of and see things from a different point of view (Moussa-Inaty, 2015). Whilst Rolfe et al. (2001) reflective model uses questions as opposed to Gibbs (1988) model, they are still limited. Higgins, Aitken-Rose, and Dixon (2009) note that effective reflective practice requires an interrogation into the experience which may not happen if the model is not used effectively.

In contrast, Gibbs (1988) model of reflection uses a systematic approach that the practitioner follows; this enables practitioners to complete the reflection in the moment rather than having to make time to write it down (Quinn, 1998). Rolfe, Freshwater, &

Jasper (2001) reflective model encompasses simple questions that then need to be explored in depth which means that may not be easily memorised and done in the moment; therefore, Schön (1981) notion of reflection in action may not be possible following this approach. Lindon (2012) highlights the importance of being able to reflect in the moment suggesting that being able to reflect about what could happen allows for the practitioner to be aware of potential consequences beforehand. However, it could be suggested that written self-reflections are an important part of reflection that can then be shared and reflected upon on more than one occasion (Gummesson and Nordmark, 2012) meaning that being able to reflect in action is not always useful therefore Rolfe, Freshwater, & Jasper(2001) model could still be used.

Rolfe, Freshwater, & Jasper(2001) suggest that reflection is not just the idea of reporting an event and describing it as it happened, but using it to understand how to develop yourself as a practitioner; they argue that Gibbs (1988) model of reflection is more of a descriptive journal rather than a critical reflection. However, the process of reflection can often stem from the description and then lead on to reflection focusing on feelings to create an evaluation of the experience (McGill and Beaty, 2001). Gibbs (1988) model encourages the practitioner to use their feelings when reflecting; Demasio & Carvalho (2013) supports the idea that emotions cannot be separated from rational thought, therefore it must be considered when reflecting. Emotions can also be a good way to ensure that reflection is done as negative feelings encourage practitioners to ensure that it does not happen in the future (Vince, 2006). Despite these understandings, Goleman (1995) maintained the premise that emotions come before rational thought which may not be beneficial for practitioners all the time. When reflecting in action, going off emotion could cause consequences that could have been prevented if they were to apply rational thinking before acting. This idea supports that of Boyd and Fales (1983) who suggested that emotions and personal perceptions of themselves can act as a barrier when critically reflecting as practitioners may not wish to explore negative areas. It could be suggested that using feelings, as suggested by Gibbs (1988) is beneficial providing it is done on action rather than acting on emotions in action.

With both models, the reflection is based on the individual completing it without outside input (Jasper, 2013); this could be a hinderance if the practitioner does not see the problem in their own practice, they will not be able to reflect on issues where as others

would (Liston, 1996). Mezirow (2000) maintains that reflections including other practitioners allow the sharing of ideas and experiences that will help all parties involved. Chen et al. (2011) points out that effective reflective progress requires input and guidance by mentors or practitioners in a higher role which requires reflection to be shared with others. In contrast, Kabat-Zinn (1994) emphasises that reflection is the process of self-enquiry which means practitioners must listen to their own mind and feelings, not those of others. Loughran (2002) considers the possibility that reflection cannot be monitored if it is not shared with mentors and practitioners may not be effectively using the model to reflect on their practice, but the practice of those around them.

From these arguments provided, Rolfe, Freshwater, & Jasper (2001) and Gibbs (1988) provide reflection models that are effective in practice if used correctly and frequently. Both models provide practitioners with different methods of reflection; Gibbs (1988) model can be used to reflect in action when needed, whereas Rolfe, Freshwater, & Jasper (2001) reflective model is best utilised when written down and each question explored in depth. However, it is equally important to argue that both these models have limitations including the fact that they do not necessarily need to be shared with mentors or higher practitioners. With this in mind, the models should be chosen according to the practitioner's preference and which one will be most beneficial to them and their practice.

# Reflection: Reflective Practice



(Welsh Government, 2015)

## What is reflection?

‘the ability to think critically and creatively’

- Appleby (2010), Finlay

(2008) considers reflective practice to be learning from and through experiences in order to gain new ideas for ones self and for professional practice. Reflective practice in education is defined as ‘process of learning which can be informal in its approach and individual or collaborative in nature’ (Melbourne department of education and early childhood development, cited in Welsh Government, 2015, pp. 3). Reflection is being able to call upon experiences and events in practice and being able to critically analyse all aspects, including positive and negative (Smith and Craft, 2011).

## Importance of Reflective Practice

In the early years settings, Littleton et al. (2005) highlights the importance of the engagement between the practitioners and the children; being able to reflect upon how we as practitioners communicate to children and interact with them plays an important part in the child's development (Smith and Craft, 2011). Early Years practitioners are required to be reflective due to the ever changing environment especially in regard to multi-professional working (Smith and Craft, 2011). Reflective practice can provide better quality experiences for both the children and the families when improvements are made to the settings and the practice as a result of reflective practice (Brookfield, 1995).

Practitioners often use reflection everyday without noticing they are doing it (Hargreaves and Page, 2013). They suggest that we only really sit down to critically think when something is negative or something goes wrong in practice. However, reflective models emphasise the need to critically frequently to identify learning needs of the children before a negative experience (Mann, Gordon, & MacLeod, 2007).



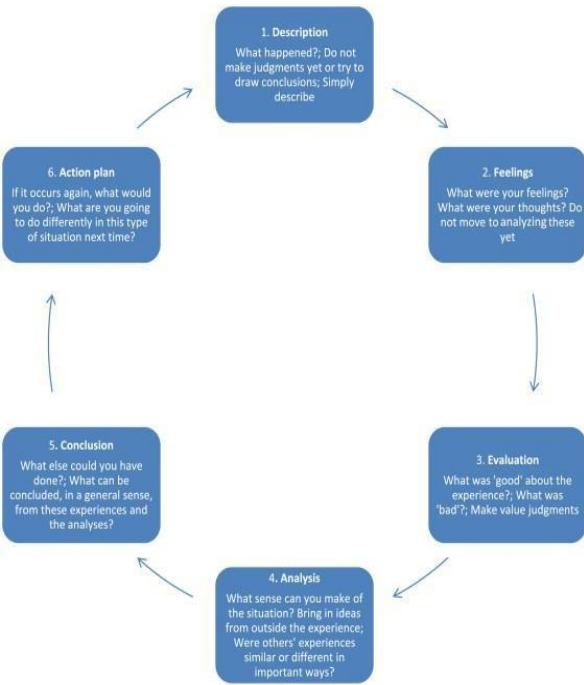
Schon, 1991

Schon (1991) highlights the difference between reflection in action and reflection on action:

- Reflection in action – Reflecting during the event/activity and thinking at that moment how you would do it differently should it arise again.
- Example of reflection in action – as the children are painting, the tables are getting covered. You reflect that next time you will put newspaper on the table to protect them.
- Reflection on action – Reflecting after the event/activity has happened and analysing how you could do things differently next time.
- Example of reflection on action – Some of the children finished the activity early whilst others were happy taking their time. You reflect after that having an activity ready for those who are quick will help you control the class.

# Reflective Models

## Gibb's Reflective cycle (1998)



This reflective model can be used as a structured reflection or as an unstructured reflection after an event (Gaberson, Oermann,& Shellenbarger, 2014).

The model is a cycle of six questions:

1. Description – What happened?
2. Feelings – How did you feel in that moment?
3. Evaluation – What was good/bad?
4. Analysis – What can you gain from this?
5. Conclusion – What could you have done?
6. Action Plan – How would you tackle it if you did it again?

- Gibbs, 1988

This model works well in Early Years settings as it can be used for reflection in action (Schon, 1991) as it is a systematic cycle that does not need to be written down (Quinn, 1998). This model also includes an action plan which allows you to set goals, and in turn, are more likely to achieve better results (Roberts and Treasure, 2012).

(Gibbs, 1988)

For more information on Gibb's Reflective Cycle (1988) visit:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/reflection/reflection-toolkit/reflecting-on-experience/gibbs-reflective-cycle>

## Rolfe et al. (2001) Reflective Model

This model focuses on asking the following questions:

- What?
- So What?
- Now What?

Answering the three questions in a systematic way places an emphasis on developing an understanding of reflective thinking through this model (Smyth, 1992). Rolfe et al. (2001) maintains that the three stages of questions push practitioners to dig deeper and ask more reflective questions.

## Overcoming the barriers

Play Wales (2018) recognise that reflective practice is not always something that can be easily done for the following reasons:

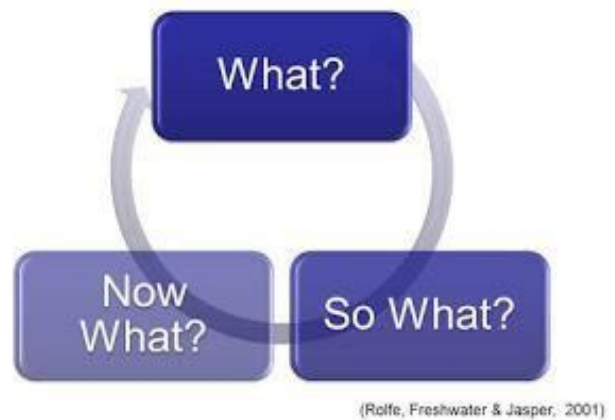
- Time
- Honesty
- Fear
- Lack of support

Loughran (2002) supported the idea that reflection can often be considered as personal therefore, professionals may not wish to highlight their own faults in fear they look unprofessional. Emotions are something that can act as a barrier due to personal perception (Boyd and Fales, 1983); however, as Play Wales (2018) highlights, with the right support this can be overcome.

Visis:

[https://issuu.com/playwales/docs/reflective\\_practice?e=5305098/62475902](https://issuu.com/playwales/docs/reflective_practice?e=5305098/62475902) for more information

## **Rolfe's Model of Reflective Practice**



(Rolfe, Freshwater & Jasper, 2001)

(Rolfe, Freshwater, & Jasper, 2001)

## Reflection vs Reflective Practice

On page one, we looked at the definition of reflection and what reflective practice is. Being able to reflect is a skill that early years practitioners need to develop to ensure positive experiences for both the families and children (Brookfield, 1995). However, being able to reflect is not useful if you are not then implementing that into your professional practice.

Play Wales (2018) maintain that after reflection, drawing to conclusion on how to prepare for the future is what reflective practice is about.

Element 3 Reflective log

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Brief description of the activity</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Group activity using visual aids and singing '5 Current Buns'. Each child will have the opportunity to 'buy' a current bun. There were 5 children aged 5-7 years with ALN and 2 adults including myself.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <i>Aim/Objective of the activity</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| The aim of the activity was to reinforce the ability to count to 5 confidently using physical objects. The resources used were interactive. I used 5 muffin tins filled with shaving foam and a red pompom on top; each child had a chance to hit the shaving foam 'bun' with a fly swat to make it 'explode'. This activity meant the children had to sing together, count, and wait their turns which coincides with the Foundation Phase (Welsh Government, 2018).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <i>Your role</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| I was leading the activity as it was after lunch before the children went to their workstations. The idea of a maths song was given to me; however, I came up with the interactive activity to meet the needs of the child.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <i>Positive aspects – why? How could these be developed further?</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Planning an interactive maths song proved to be popular with the children who often struggle to sit still as they knew they needed to wait their turn. This has led me to think of other activities that can be done to songs that mean turn taking acts as an incentive to the children. The children also enjoyed making a mess with the shaving foam in a controlled setting; I reflected that having something that the children are not often allowed to do meant the child was excited to participate in the active and I was able to meet objectives in a way the children enjoyed. I had prepared for the shaving cream to go everywhere so I sat the chairs at a distance back that meant the children would not get messy. This worked well and meant that in the future, I would know where to place the chairs to ensure clean clothes. |

*Challenging aspects – why? Link to your own practice.*

One of the children did not want to wait for his turn and I used my communication skills to encourage the child to wait his turn. I used sign language which helped me communicate with the child in a way that they understood.

During the activity, I realised that I had not placed anything on the carpet under the 'buns' which meant I could see the shaving foam marking the carpet. I reflected in action that next time I do a messy activity, I will make sure that I use covers on the carpet to prevent it happening again.

One of the children hit 2 'buns' when it was their turn; I was not prepared for this to happen which I should have planned for as this was likely to happen. I had to ask the adult to get the shaving cream from the cupboard. This mean that the children had to wait for something that I could have prevented if I was better prepared. In the future, I would ensure that I had the shaving cream nearby to stop the delay.

*What knowledge did **you** demonstrate?*

I used my knowledge on the foundation phase to ensure that I was meeting some of the aims required by the government.

I used my previous knowledge on the children in the group to reflect on what they enjoy and built an activity that would work well with them and keep them engaged. I also had to use knowledge on what the children are used to doing after lunch and on a rainy day. The children had been inside all day due to the weather, I knew I needed to do something that would engage them.

I also used my knowledge on what number songs the children like to sing to which was within their ability levels.

*What skills did **you** demonstrate?*

I used my signalong skills to communicate to a child who is non-verbal to encourage him to wait his turn. I was able to use my communication skills to see that the way I was communicating with him originally was not working and that I needed to change my communication to meet his needs.

I used my skills of reflection to reflect on previous activities to know what the children enjoy and what they would engage well with.

*Which values did **you** demonstrate?*

I demonstrated fairness to ensure that each child had a turn at hitting the shaving cream despite the fact one child hit two. I filled the case back up so that no one missed their turn.

For me, objectiveness is important in a turn taking activity; rather than focusing on behaviours from the rest of the day, I focused on behaviour shown during this activity when choosing who's turn was next. This also links with demonstrating honesty when choosing who got to go next. It would have been easy for me to choose a certain child last because he had not had a good day, however he joined in the activity well and sat nicely waiting for his turn which is why he did not go last. I also took responsibility for my part in the activity. It was my lack of preparation that meant the carpet got stained and it was my responsibility to ensure I had a contingency plan if it went wrong, which I did not.

*What could be done differently in future? Why?*

In the future, I would ensure that I put a cover down on the carpet to ensure that the messy activity did not stain the carpet. I would ensure that I had used the adults in the group to support the children who struggle with turn taking rather than allowing the children to sit where they wished. I would also have extra resources nearby so that if I needed it, I would not have to stop the activity to gather them.

### Element 4 Personal Development Plan

| Area for further development<br>(provide further details)                                       | Why?                                                                                                                                                              | How?                                                                                                                                                                                  | Who/Where?                                                                                          | When?                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| British Sign Language course to be able to communicate with children with hearing difficulties. | I wish to work with children with additional learning needs and part of that could potentially be children with hearing impairments.                              | Courses are regularly held by special education settings and they are available online via distance learning.                                                                         | I am likely to choose a course that I can complete from home due to easy access and availability.   | This is something I could complete at any time however due to the intensity of my current degree as well as working, this is something I will do during the summer holidays. |
| Complete a PGCE after completing my Early Years undergraduate degree.                           | My reasons for completing the early years undergraduate degree is my desire to be a primary school teacher. A PGCE is required for me to attain this.             | I will begin looking at prospectuses and applying for universities that offer primary PGCEs.                                                                                          | The UCAS website offers information on all universities offering PGCEs as well as talking to UWTSD. | I will aim to start my PGCE in September 2021 after completing my Early Years undergraduate degree.                                                                          |
| Paediatric First Aid Course                                                                     | Working with children does not require me to have a first aid certificate, however I personally think it is important to have it as children are at greater risk. | I will talk to my current workplace for a recommended course as they often provide courses for the staff. Some PGCE placements offer courses at an additional fee for their students. | The courses are likely to be in Carmarthenshire as that is where my current workplace is.           | I will complete this course before I finish my PGCE to ensure I have it to put on my CV when applying for teaching jobs.                                                     |

|                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Working on building up my confidence.    | Working as a teacher will mean I will have to lead a class team and will often be observed by the leadership team; I currently do not have the confidence to maintain this career.              | To develop my confidence, I will ensure I talk up more during my undergraduate lectures as it will give me experience talking in front of peers. I will also find way of developing my confidence in my personal life as well to ensure I'm covering all aspects of my life. | I can achieve this in my undergraduate lectures at UWTSD and at my workplace.                                                                                                                                        | This is an on-going area of development that I will build up throughout the next couple of years of education and experience.                                    |
| Learning to speak, read, and write Welsh | Being able to speak Welsh is essential when teaching in a primary school in Wales. I currently have extremely limited knowledge on the language of the country that I wish to live and work in. | I am currently completing the Welsh lessons on an online app however; this is limited as I am aware it varies between northern and southern words. I will take Welsh courses when I complete my PGCE and I will look into an intensive course throughout the summer.         | I will continue to use my online app as well as asking colleagues to use more welsh in front of me. There are also courses in Carmarthenshire that are run throughout the summer holidays which I will enquire into. | This is an on-going area of development that will take time to complete however I will need to speak Welsh to level 1 by the time of graduation (estimated 2022) |

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