

No AI used in this assignment

Title- The Professional Practitioner- ECEY4009 (total 3028 words)

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1: Professional Development Plan (PDP). (500 words)

I am currently a teaching assistant in a primary school setting and have been there for almost eighteen years. Throughout my career I have worked within the nursery up to year 6 and taken roles within breakfast club, afterschool club and lunchtime supervising. Whilst working in the school, I have worked with children with numerous different developmental and social needs and run a nurture group. At this moment in my life, I feel I am ready to progress further, and my ambition is to either become a primary school teacher or go on further to become a college lecturer to teach the next generation of early years workers. However, to achieve this there are a few developmental stages I will need to complete in order to further my career.

No	Improvement and Development Goals	Success Criteria (How I will know when I have made this change)	The actions I will take to achieve the goal	Timelines	What will this help me to achieve?	Achievements (3 monthly review)
1	To complete my current BA2 Early Years Education and care degree.	I will have good attendance in university. Submit all assignments. A mentor at my placement acknowledging the required hours intended.	Attend lectures regularly, completing all assignments at the pass grade, as well as completing the number of hours required in placement with children under the age of 7.	The course is for two years at the university of Wales trinity saint Davids.	Becoming a teacher, nursery manager or a college lecturer.	Every four weeks results from an assignment will be issued, with a percentage mark. At the end of the course receive a level 6 credited degree and certificate.
2	To further my career goals, I will re-sit my English, Science and Mathematical GCSES exams.	To achieve these, I need Pass the GCSE exams at a grade 4, C or above. I will need to sign up to an online or college course, complete all coursework and aim for a grade 4, C and above.	Attend an evening or day college course, or potentially an online course.	I hope to achieve these within a year at most three years.	Grade C or above is required in all three subjects to become a teacher.	To hand in coursework on time with a good percentage mark to help towards GCSE result. Gain a C or above in the exams. Be awarded a credited certificate from a reliable examination board like WJEC.
3	To complete a PGCE teaching degree.	Enroll onto a university course and attend different placements working with variety of ages.	Attend lectures and placement regularly. Unsure to complete all assignments and criteria set by the university.	The Course is for one year.	Become a Primary School teacher. Possible tutoring opportunities. Also, step towards becoming a college lecturer in the future.	Gain a Level 7 qualified teacher status and awards a credited degree and certificate.
4	Learn Makaton, BSL or sign along.	Using this incidentally and regularly within personal and professional life.	Sign up to an online course or class for training. Volunteer in charities and events supporting these skills.	To complete levels 1-4, equivalent to 7 hours each level would require 28 hours of training	To support ALN children and adults in their development.	Complete levels 1-5 within 5 years and gain a credited certificate.

2: Reflective Practice Briefing paper. (1002 words)

Reflection and reflective practice?

Researching the word reflection could give at least two definitions according to (Bassot, 2016) who states that one would possibly refer to a reflection in a mirror or object that casts an image back at oneself. The other referring to a thought process, reflecting on one's actions or issues and thinking of ways to improve. This briefing paper will investigate the thought process definition and its benefits. (Brock, 2014, p3) re-enforces that reflection is about evaluating and exploring an issue, using personal initiative and experience, as-well as being open minded, to improve development further. As professionals we reflect daily on many issues. This leads on to the discussion of reflective practice, (Pacey, 2016) discusses by evaluating on one's thoughts with the focus to change or adapt, can lead to further improvements and development, with the emphasis that this thought process and implementation is a cycle that repeats itself to support progression. Many professions require reflective practice, the *University of Cambridge* (2023) highlights roles such as educators which reflect on interactions with students and underpin what worked and what didn't and foster ways to improve in the future.

Importance of Reflective practice within the early years?

Reflective practice is a dominant part of working within an early year setting according to (Paige-Smith, Craft, 2008, p1), which states that as practitioners, part of the job is to reflect in numerous ways, to improve development. They highlight that within the twenty first century reflective practice should be "a key expectation" to all professions working with or alongside children to scaffold development. Further supporting this (Hallet, 2013, p25) goes on to relate that through implementation, practitioners will demonstrate effective opportunities for both children and families. She discusses that this will expand provision and help make proactive decisions to whether something is beneficial or not. *Roscommon County Childcare Community* (2016) highlight the benefits of being in the moment, focusing on the children's interests and engagement, help foster better relationships, learning, manage behaviours and development. All these are key to the early years, to understand the parts working well to where improvements need to be made. Acknowledging our own strengths and weakness, learn to communicate effectively with all adults surrounding children's development.

Theory behind reflective practice:

Researching into the background of reflective practice brings up two names John Dewey and Donald Schon. Studies from (Kumar,2024) introduces Dewey as an "educational reformer" through his research introduces the term reflection as an act which involves critical thinking and finding solutions. Discussing that reflection is not planned but is supported by being receptive, meaning looking at things from different angles. Also, the responsibility aspect looking at the positives and negatives of our actions and lastly the wholeheartedness approach of implementing prior and current knowledge. Dewey's studies were supported a lot by Schon, who although agreed with Dewey theory went on to enhance it further. (Kumar,2024) points out how Schon introduced two further key elements to reflection, "*Reflection-in-action*", this focusing on thinking in the moment, what is currently happening and adapting, Then "*Reflection-on-action*" is more about looking back at something that occurred, looking how things can change for the next time. Both theorists highlighting the importance of critical thinking, personal reflection and the environment to progress and develop.

Driscoll's Model on reflection



Figure 1:

Gibbs Model on reflection



Graham Gibbs, 1988

Figure 2:

Two models of reflection:

The images above show two different models of a reflective cycle, while both have some obvious differences and similarities their message that reflection is a continuous cycle is clearly shown. (University of Cambridge) informs us the Driscoll's model created in the mid-1990s, focuses on "3 *What's*". Firstly "*what*" happened, thinking about the events. Secondly "*so what*", looking what knowledge was gained from it and lastly, "*Now what?*" looking at how to progress to improve in the future. This model is simple to understand and is a baseline of questions to help introduce reflection into daily practices, however the lack of detail may prevent further development. The (University of Cambridge) shows Gibbs model as one of the more "*complex*" types. Having six stages overall, it breaks down the thinking process. It includes the three similar elements as Driscoll, however, adds in feelings, talks about analysis from prior knowledge, research and a conclusion, summing up the whole situation, and developing a deeper understanding. This model builds a detailed and valuable understanding of an event, which would help the progression development and possible used once more experienced with the models of reflection.

Conclusion

Consolidating the information provided has given the meaning of reflection and reflective practice and the thought process behind a situation. It is supporting ways to improve by stepping back, thinking about the event that has happened or happening, discovering ways to make it better and creating a repetitive cycle. The history of two researchers, John Dewey and Donald Schon, emphasises this in their theories and promote the skill within the professional practices. This has led to numerous professions working within care, medical or education, using reflective practice within their workforce as a professional development or to foster better understanding with issues that arise. Through implementing the benefits such as confidence growth within staff, the value of prior, current knowledge and fostering relationships has been positive. Leading on from Dewey and Schon theory to support professionals, a few reflective models were created by various researchers to support the reflective steps thought process. Two of these models are shown above in Driscoll's and Gibbs versions. Driscoll's model on reflection, is a starting point to help scaffold a practitioner's thought process and begin the reflective cycle, breaking it down into simple steps. Gibbs model then expands, which when familiar and confident implementing the models, goes deeper into more detailed cycles, introducing the emotions expressed and how that may affect aspects, which helps get a better understanding of the situations. Overall, the research gathered has deepened the understanding of reflective practice and how it has progressed, developed knowledge and demonstrating as a beneficial skill within professions across the workforce.

3: The Professional Practitioner. (1526 words).

The Professional Practitioner

There are a few definitions of what a professional is, according to (*Cambridge learner's dictionary*), some of which are adjectives describing a job which needs specific training, a person who earns money through an interest or a person who demonstrates attention to detail. However, it is also classed as a noun relating to a person whose job requires qualifications or someone who has been within a role for many years demonstrating competence. Throughout this essay there will be research into professional practice and what a professional is, looking at values professionals hold and their importance, as well as into other key skills related to being a professional practitioner.

Leading on from the dictionary definition of a professional is (Gasper 2015, p2/3) who agrees that a professional has certain qualifications or expertise in a field. This is further supported by an article by (Perez, 2019, p212) who discusses how professionals have distinctive knowledge, expertise gained through specific training, understanding standards and devotion to serving the needs of others without discrimination. (Chalke, 2013, p3) also writes of this, emphasizing a professional is a "*distinguished and learned individual with significant expertise*." Further discussion on professional practice is (Hyson and Tomlinson, 2014, p146) saying a person who implements and relates their training within their environments demonstrates professional practice. Hyson and Tomlinson focus on the early years professionals, whose implementations support children in all areas of development and make the children's needs paramount in decisions.

A professional practitioner requires skills, however as (Gasper, 2015) highlights that within the Early years settings there is more focus on the qualities a person exhibits, whether they have had relevant training or not. The values we hold can help guide our professionalism. However, being a professional practitioner requires specific values to implement the best practice. (Powell, 2010, p215) discusses these important key values, the most important is someone who enjoys being around

children and wants to enhance the children's development. Others consist of the value of communication and co-operation, to be active amongst discussions with adults involved within the children's lives, from care givers, co-workers and outside agencies. Powell emphasizes the value of confidence, using initiative, to be nurturing, supporting, understanding and patient. The importance of being inclusive, willing to learn, while always being professional and exploring fun. These values are crucial to professional practice according to *the general teaching council for Scotland, (2021)* these scaffold our professional development enabling us to be on a continuous learning cycle. It demonstrates our dedication to supporting the children's development and looking at each child's unique abilities and requirements, working co-operatively with all involved within the children's lives and how we impact that. Lastly and most importantly, we understand our role in safeguarding and ensuring we are implementing the rights of all children.

Following on from of the values, we look deeper into communication and relationships and their importance to professionals, their practice and in meeting the children's requirements. Dunhill (2009) emphasizes that communication is a key point in working with all involved within children's lives as well as the children themselves. Dunhill defines that communication is based on active listening, being engaged with the people acknowledging what they are saying, being able to ask questions, develop an understanding of their train of thought and lastly being responsive giving feedback. Relationships are built on connections and as early years practitioners; we not only build relationships with the children in our care but also with their families and any outside agencies that help support the children. Hall (2013) discusses reaching out to parents to build relationships and connections to support children is needed to "bridge the gap" in their education. This however includes all adults involved in the children's development with effective communication and relationships. An article by (Sylva, Melhuish et al ,2004) points out that some of the most successful childcare environments from research, were the ones that engaged and connected with the carers on any implementations to support the children's learning, as resources could be shared.

The article by Sylva, Melhuish et al, also highlights that the practitioners should demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of curriculum to get the best results

in children's development. Understanding the developmental stages and the learning pedagogy. Across the country there are legislations set to every childcare setting or educational setting with required standards. As a practitioner it is best practice to familiarise yourself with the standards within your county and workplace. One of these is *The National Minimum Standards* (NMS) mainly focusing on required standards for child minders and day care settings and the other being the *National Curriculum for Wales* (CFW), which sets the standards for educational settings. Even though these are two different environments they each have the importance in providing a standard of care and learning to the children within it. As practitioners it is vital to understand and know what they are and how to implement them. *The National Minimum Standards (updated 2023)* highlights some of the standards such as staff ratios ensuring the staff to children ratio is kept, record keeping or assessments are up to date, the environment is a safe and effective place to learn and play, as well as staff training such as first aid and safeguarding. Safeguarding is one of the vital standards and understanding that everyone who works with or alongside children should have the knowledge of what safeguarding means and their roles in reporting. Today *Safeguarding for Wales (2024)*, requires a practitioner to be familiar with the procedures of spotting signs of abuse, record keeping and reporting, within the information they highlight the guidelines to ensure that everyone is using the same language and terms to implement effective practice.

Throughout the professional practitioner's role, there is a requirement to work in partnerships and with multi- agencies. Established in the early 2000s it was introduced to policies in both social and educational settings (Gasper, 2009, p1-2). Gasper goes on to discuss how the government made the change to identify the benefits of collaborative working with a variety of different services to help support children's needs and share information and resources to how these needs can be supported. Gasper also states that not only does this collaborative work benefit the children and their families, but also the professionals giving them chance to improve and reflect. Supporting Gasper is (Cheminais, 2009) who writes that co-operating with multi-agencies improves children's education and emotional well-being. Cheminais creates a list to favour the benefits of this partnership, the main points Cheminais states is teachers gaining more knowledge of what support is out there to

help specific needs, gaining from shared knowledge and experience, as well as building a better outcome for the children's development.

During 2022 the *Curriculum for Wales (CFW)*, introduced a new framework looking at four key elements for learning, these become “The four Purposes”. Both schools and nursery settings follow these purposes as a baseline for their planning, assessment criteria and developing regularity throughout learning. The (CFW) discusses how “experience, knowledge and skills” are the key elements for future employment and society. The environment should provide the experiences for the children to explore ‘the four purposes’. Promoting that children should understand how their learning links to experiences. Observations and assessments should then demonstrate the progression, by showing the practitioner as well as the child where they are at present to their next progression steps. This framework emphasises on the adults linked to the curriculum, whether the settings, practitioners or the government meets national standards and meets ambitions.

Further contributing to the (CFW) is the *United Nations Convention on the rights of the child* (UNCRC). The (UNCRC) is a consensus between many countries which promote the rights of a child. This legislation is the foundations to our settings and our role as a practitioner, it sets out ‘54 articles’ that every child has a right to. Out of the ‘54 articles’ the (UNCRC) state each of these rights are fundamental and none of them should be more dominant than the other, however there are four that are important within our professional role, they are being ‘non-discriminating, putting the child best interests first, rights to development, survival and lastly the right to be heard.’ In an article by (Eriksson, 2021) it discusses how children have very little voice within our society as they are unable to place votes. However, as the adults it is our role to promote their rights, and this is where the UNCRC steps in.

All this research provided concludes what a professional practitioner is, a person who has knowledge within their place of work. It highlights that the values and qualities are paramount to their environment especially within early years, which require persons who are nurturing, understanding and patient individuals. Communication and building positive relationships are vital and help towards working with outside agencies, to contribute to the children’s needs and development. The

depth and knowledge of the role and knowing all safeguarding procedures and implementing them effectively through observations, discussions and assessment help children develop, thrive and have their voice heard. Implementing all these within professional practice is following legislation and promoting the health and wellbeing of children.

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Figure 1: *Driscoll's model of reflective learning cycle*: Available at: <https://nshcs.hee.nhs.uk/programmes/stp/trainers/iacc-2023-assessor-guidance/an-overview-of-the-iacc> (Accessed:20/10/24)

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