

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Part 1

What do I know already: After A Levels I attended college and gained my NVQ Level 2 and 3 in Supporting specialist teaching and learning in schools, following this I achieved my level 4 through a first year foundation degree in Early childhood Education, I have extensive experience in the Early years Education sector from Nursery, throughout primary school age, in both mainstream and Specialist teaching facilities.

What have I learnt so far: So far, I have gained knowledge from many aspects in an Early years setting, knowledge of the curriculum for Wales, safeguarding procedures and what is expected of a teaching assistant in Early years through my employment.

What do I want to develop: I would like to develop a deeper understanding of Early childhood development, greater knowledge on Harvard referencing and I would like to graduate with a PGCE after my degree in Early years Education and Care.

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?)
Develop a deeper understanding of childhood development.	Attend university lectures on the first 1000 days, read books from the reading list and further reading on child development, look at research from different theorists such as Vygotsky and Piaget. research online resources from organisations such	University reading list, access to online resources, a placement with children aged 2 and under.	Ongoing during my degree.	The ability to compare theories and link theories into practice, to be confident in discussion on child development and writing academically on child development also recognising early childhood

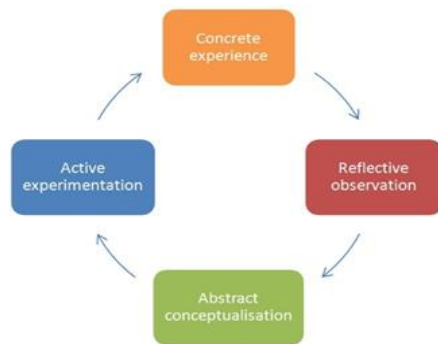
	as UNICEF and to be able to attend a placement to observe children during these milestones.			milestones in real life.
Enhance my knowledge, understanding and ability to use Harvard referencing in my assignments.	Use the Turnitin draft for my assignments to check I am paraphrasing correctly, refer to my Harvard referencing handbook throughout my assignments, check in with lecturers if I need support and check my citations are correct before submitting.	Harvard Referencing handbook, online library reading lists and online resources such as Cite them right and Turnitin.	To be confident in referencing by the end of level 4	Reference every source in my assignments, correctly citing sources with fewer mistakes in my work and reference a range of sources competently with a higher grade in my assignments due to knowledge of referencing.
To graduate my degree in Early years Education and Care and complete my PGCE.	Attending all my lectures and seek support from lecturers when needed, improve my academic skills and prioritise studying, access further reading to enhance my skills and reflect on feedback from my assignment to progress throughout my degree.	Lecturer and peer support, Attending University lectures, online library and reading lists, career advice and access to the library, access to a placement for PGCE and a completed degree in Early Years education and Care.	3 Years	Consistency in my work life balance and an improvement in grades throughout my degree, demonstrate my understanding of topics I have studied in University, A high grade degree in Early Years education and care and a PGCE with a readiness to find a job and begin my teaching career.

Part 2

What is reflection and reflective practise? Reflection is a process used to evaluate events, it looks into our thoughts and how we act during these events, it helps us to look at what happened and why, reflecting supports us to gain a new perspective on what we have done helping us to analyse to manage change and progression (Thompson, 2021, p5). Reflection can help us identify any areas of improvement but also any existing strengths, it helps us make better decisions for the future and shows us a clear evaluation of our performance (Cottrell, 2024, p125). Reflection plays a vital role in professional practice and is essential in professional development, reflective practice is viewed as an approach for everyone with more experienced individuals reflecting on it deeper , the concept of reflective practice looks at the individuals thoughts however to gain better practice having the criticism and support off an individual with greater knowledge and experience can assist in promoting its development, Reflective practice looks at what you did and why you made that choice rather than other choices (Lindon, 2016, p7).	Why is reflective practise important to EY practise? The early years sector is continuously undergoing change due to international influences and government policies therefore Early years practitioners are regularly being introduced to new ideas; therefore, it is key for early years practitioners to reflect on these developments to provide high quality education and experiences for children (Hallett, 2013, p25). Early years practitioners need to adapt to changes as they occur whether they be changes of policies, practice or knowledge, whether a person feels negative or positive of these changes it is important to reflect on them and the impact it has on children and their families. Reflective practice can help develop a child's academic journey, promote a child's self-esteem and positive behaviour and can also support the Early years practitioner in critically thinking about their role and developing their responsibilities (Brock, 2015).
The theory of reflective practise: Schon's theory of reflective practice highlights that professional learning is achieved through the reflection of experiences, Schon (1983) differentiates between two different types of reflection, these are reflection in action and reflection on action. Reflection in action - In daily practice professionals will rely on tacit knowledge or as Schon describes as "Knowing in action" this enhances on how practitioners often have tacit knowledge therefore having an understanding on what they are currently dealing with and helping to make decisions as the events take place, this supports practitioners to adjust their approaches immediately. During this process the practitioner may critically reflect on the previous knowledge of	

their actions to guide them in their future actions whereas when we reflect on action, we are looking back at the action that has taken place rather than at the exact time and reflect on what has happened and why, and what we will change for improvements in the future (Schon, 1992).

Kolb's model



(Kolb 1984)

Gibbs model



(Gibbs, 1988)

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

Kolb (1984), developed a cycle of learning based on the work of Dewey (1933), he looks at the links between the experience that has undergone, then recalling and reflecting on this experience followed by how we might progress through changing what we had done previously ending on the actions we will implement for improvement (Johnston, 2018).

Morris (2020), describes Kolb's experiential learning cycle as a well-cited and often used framework for academia, he states that the research on this has grown excessively over the past 20 years in many fields including Education and is a crucial part of the learning process, however he shares a main concern of the learning cycle being the confusion around the term *concrete experience*, he revealed after analysing the term he came to the conclusion of five different themes in accordance with *concrete experience*. On the other hand, Močinić, and Tatković, (2021) describe Kolb's experiential learning cycle as an enhancement in professional development as it links theory and practice together.

Gibbs reflective cycle (1988) gives a guide to reflect on experiences and learn from them, the way it is structured as a cycle supports users to reflect and repeat on experiences. The model is a reflective way of analysing experiences whether they are new, occasional or regular experiences, the stages of the model use helpful questioning and can be used individually and equally well in a group situation (The University of Edinburgh, 2024).

Similarly to Kolb's experiential learning cycle (1984) Gibbs reflective cycle (1988) is shown in the way of a cycle, however Gibbs reflective model has a component focusing on feelings, what a person may feel during the experience and after, how they were thinking during the experience and after and also how other people may have been feeling and thinking during the experience. Dhollande, Barnard, and Shephard, (2025) suggest Gibbs reflective cycle (1988) to be effective for learners to reflect on situations physically and emotionally as it guides them to connect expectations and personal experiences and can be used throughout a variety of subjects and methods, however it is also suggested that the Gibbs reflective cycle (1988) has been known to be unmanageable due to its time consuming nature and also the similarity between 'evaluation and 'analysis' can often lead to confusion.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Reflection plays an essential role in being a professional and within professional practice, helping us to analyse what we have done, approach it from a new perspective and change it accordingly to progress. Reflection helps us to not only look at areas that need improvement but also celebrate any existing strengths and what has worked well. Kolb's experiential learning cycle (1984) and Gibbs reflective cycle (1988) both contain components to support us on reflecting and use a detailed diagram to guide us, therefore helping us reflect on our experience through different stages, there are many pros and cons based off of these reflective models however both support us to reflect on what we have done and what we will need to do next.

Part 3

To be a professional Early years Practitioner other than showing a strong understanding of Early years Education and care and the desired qualifications, the main prospects are to nurture and promote the child's early education and their development through providing the opportunities for them to learn and develop in their education, while providing them with care and safeguarding to promote their wellbeing and safety and providing them with a safe learning environment. Also to assess and enhance successful practice and to collaborate with other professionals, parents and outside agencies to meet the needs of the children and help them to progress (Johnston, 2018).

Professionals are usually perceived as someone with high levels of knowledge on the subject, skills and qualifications in the field also, in addition, being a professional is reflected through a person's choices they make and their everyday behaviour. Some professionals can be seen as being more professional due to levels of qualifications and those with management roles or more senior roles (Solvason and Webb, 2023). Oberhuemer (2005) introduces a framework of professionalism consisting of four stages which are knowledge, interaction with children, collaboration with parents and leadership and care.

The relationships between school and parents are important in ensuring positive experiences for the child and improvement in their health and well-being and their development, this can be through support and empathy towards the parent, sharing information and knowledge and providing support with external agencies if needed, parents may often feel uncomfortable when asking for support, especially in the areas of behaviour support or parenting techniques, a strong and positive

relationship between parents and practitioners can help parents feel more open to discussion to receive the support they or their child needs (Wilson, 2025, p.13).

When interacting with children, practitioners will communicate verbally but also with non-verbal communication, this can include ways such as through play, taking their thoughts and ideas into account and demonstrating positive actions and behaviour which we hope are qualities they will also demonstrate in their future development, practitioners may also only communicate if needed, a child playing alone may need someone to play with or a child who is seen struggling or asks for help will need support, however some children playing alone or with others may want to be left alone to play or when working may want to be left alone to solve their problems by themselves, this can also account for children who may be dysregulated, these children may seek adult support but others may need the time alone to regulate their emotions (Johnston, 2018, p.507).

Having an in-depth knowledge of Early years for practitioners is important, using the skills and self-awareness and portraying ethical behaviour, Early years practitioners will often use guidance from a range of different professional organisations though it is still important to have a suitable ethical approach and to remain consistent with it. Ethics and values often look at the issues around the care of the child and relationships rather than supporting a child's academic learning, but it is important to support a child's cognitive needs equally to their emotional needs. Practitioners should understand that a happy, safe environment with emotional stability are commonly expressed as the children's needs rather than a personal and ethical view (McMahon and Dyer, 2018, p.4).

Social Care Wales (2025) claims that the safeguarding procedures are for everyone involved in working in health and social care, education and other facilities, it states that it is responsible for every practitioner to safeguard all children to promote their safety and wellbeing. Practitioners should share information in accordance with their organisations safeguarding policy following the correct procedures on who to contact first if there is a concern of child abuse or neglect, be aware of signs of neglect and signs of abuse from the home or outside the family home, putting the best interests of the child first and being aware of the impact neglect or abuse can have on the child therefore completing the relevant safeguarding training and understanding the process of safeguarding. Those who work as practitioners in the Early years sector are in a key position to identify signs of abuse, this is due to their skills when observing the children and their knowledge on the development of children and young people, social services notify the schools if there is a child on the child protection register, this is for practitioners to monitor the child's areas of progress, behaviour and attendance, in addition to this education settings are required to have a designated safeguarding officer to provide that link between school and social services in a school setting, this person is usually the headteacher and staff need to

be aware of who they need to contact when a safeguarding issue arises. Additionally, schools are urged to create a curriculum in which children build practice and skills to safeguard them against abuse and to support them to speak up if they are in a difficult and distressing situation (Hobart and Frankel, 2009, p. 92).

Multi-agency or inter-agency looks at professionals that collaborate closely and share knowledge and information confidentially in regards to the child, these people will often work directly with the child within their educational environment and practitioners who work closely with the child, following on from this, professionals from all aspects should share their expertise and knowledge to support the child whether it be within the Early years setting or for the child and their family. The collaboration of multi-agency plays a vital role in supporting positive outcomes for children and young people as it enhances a mutual understanding of goals and principles, builds and strengthens professional and personal relationships, enhances knowledge and creates strategies for intervention, as a result this can provide early intervention and proactive support (Jones, 2008, p.142).

Observations are recognised as an essential part of Early years Education; through observation you learn more about the child and with that knowledge you can support the child's interests and development, according to Estyn (2024) a new observation template was created to support the planning focusing on *noticing, analysing and responding* this allows them to build on children's interests and experiences and therefore tailoring planning towards the child's individual interests, abilities and needs. A child's development can be both supported as an individual or in groups with peers and therefore exchanges of regular and informal discussions with other practitioners will support the child's progress and towards the planning of activities. It is important that lead practitioners review the observations weekly or fortnightly, this can support the curriculum planning and helps practitioners identify any steps that need to be taken for individual children this could be focusing on a particular skill, expanding their knowledge and/or enhancing their learning. Following on from this planning in action focuses on how to effectively develop and support a child's education, considering the children's interests within the planning, including a focused activity to enhance a child's knowledge and skills, focusing on the enabling environment and how it continues to contribute towards the next steps in provision, encourage purposeful interactions and interactive, turn-taking conversations and extending their learning through play (Birth to 5 matters, 2021, p.38).

Professional practitioners are guided by the UNCRC principles as they highlight the essential rights of every child regardless of their ability, religion or ethnicity. The UNCRC contain 54 articles that address all areas of childhood, it outlines their civil, social, political, cultural and economic rights. In the UN convention four articles are known for being core principles and therefore all other articles will stem from these four principles, these four principles are *Non-discrimination, best interest of the child,*

right to life survival and development and the *right to be heard* (UNCRC, 1989). Following on from this UNCRC ensure all children are entitled to an effective and meaningful education, articles 28 and 29 highlight a child's entitlement to a high standard of education, article 29 focuses on what the educational establishment should aim to do including, supporting the growth of a child's personality as well as their skills and physical and cognitive development to help them in reaching their full potential, developing their respect and values for different cultures, preparing the child to live in a free society developing their respect, peace and understanding, tolerance and gender equity among all backgrounds and cultures, and also encouraging respect for the natural environment (UNCRC, 1989).

In conclusion, early years professional practice follows a framework of key principles, combining these principles will ensure a child's inclusive and individual needs are met, applying knowledge and skills to practice, developing positive relationships and collaborating with outside agencies to support the child, maintaining strong communication and being consistent with a suitable ethical approach, In addition to this safeguarding children, understanding the procedures and being vigilant to signs of neglect and abuse is vital in the safety and well-being of children and young people, using observational skills to learn more about the child, personally and academically and then providing suitable planning that will enhance the child's abilities and knowledge. Additionally, following the principles of UNCRC practitioners are required to provide all children with a high-quality education and give all children an equal opportunity regardless of their background or circumstances.

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