ECEY4009/C
2405852
Word count - 3054

The Professional Practitioner Portfolio

No AI has been used in this portfolio.

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1: Personal Development Plan (510 words)

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	Timeline	What will this help me to achieve?	Achievement (3 monthly review)
1	**To complete a PGCE course.**	I will have completed the PGCE. Start to feel more confident within the classroom and have learnt new things ready for my teaching career.	I will need to work hard, have good organisational skills and keep myself focused. Seek out support from teachers, senior leaders and mentors.	3 years	This will help me achieve my dream job of becoming a teacher in a primary school.	PGCE certificate.
2	**To complete the Early Years Education and Care: Early Years Practitioner Status (BA Hons) degree.**	I will receive a BA Hons certificate/diploma. This will enable me to progress further in my education and career.	I will need to be organised, have good time management, keep myself focused and motivated, and seek help or support from others on the course or lecturers if needed.	2 years	This will help me to progress in my career, pushing me on into further education, for example, a PGCE.	Certificate or diploma.
3	**To learn and be confident using more incidental Welsh in work with the children.**	I will know I have made this change when I start using basic Welsh phrases daily and I feel confident using incidental Welsh within my work setting, around students and staff.	I will need to attend a Welsh course or a sabbatical. I can also learn from watching others who are confident when using incidental Welsh. I will also use the Duolingo app to support me with this.	4 months	This will help me be confident using and teaching basic Welsh phrases in an education setting with students and staff, and hopefully encourage others to start using incidental Welsh too.	Increasing in confidence and using Welsh daily. A course certificate.

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	Timeline	What will this help me to achieve?	Achievement (3 monthly review)
4	**To improve how I take observations of children in the classroom and outdoor setting.**	I will know I have made this change when I am confident in making meaningful observations. For example, if a colleague informs me that an observation I have written, has impacted how they see, deal or interact with a child.	I will attend a course on observations. I will ask early year practitioners for advice and support. Collect research on the best ways to take observations.	1 month	This will help me in making meaningful observations that can support the child. It can also help collate evidence needed for ALN children.	Independent, confident and able to use the meaningful observations I have made to support the child.

Reflection

I am creating this Personal Development Plan (PDP) to help me achieve my personal goals in both my further education and career. I hope this PDP will support my progress in an education setting, which is my passion. By completing it, I aspire to become a more confident and independent practitioner, with the aim of advancing to a PGCE and becoming a teacher. To succeed, I will rely on the support of my family, friends, peers, colleagues, and mentors. Whilst I feel slightly apprehensive, I'm dedicated to this PDP because I believe it will significantly enhance my career in both a classroom and education setting.

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2: Briefing Paper (981 words)

What is reflection and reflective practice?

As stated by Brock (2014, p. 7) reflection and reflective practice play a key role in professionals training and are important values for them. It is used in many different professions, especially education, healthcare and social care, where it plays a key role in their professional practice. The University of Hull (2024) notes that "reflection is a natural activity" and that we all *think* about what we have either done or said or things that wish we could do, which is why reflection is linked with hindsight. As Participatory Methods (no date) explains, reflective practice is an approach that allows a person or a group to reflect on a situation and their actions taken to "engage in a process of continuous learning", ultimately leading to improve their professional skills and their practice.

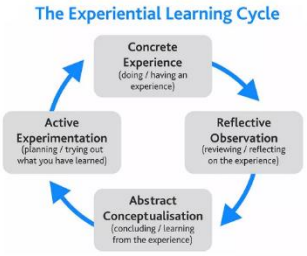
Why is reflective practice important to EY practice?

The Welsh Government (2023) highlights the importance of reflective practice in early childhood play, learning and care, and explains that engaging in reflection allows practitioners to understand their actions and the reasons behind them. Reflective practice also helps them see their strengths and the areas where they can improve. By dedicating time to thoughtfully and carefully evaluate their work and actions, it should allow them to discover fresh ideas and have a better understanding of what they want to achieve. There are plenty of questions they can ask themselves to benefit their practice, for example, do our actions affect our practice, and if so, how? They also point out that reflective practice should be a purposeful and ongoing process and that by giving practitioners regular dedicated time to review, they can develop professionally and enhance the results for infants and children.

The theory of reflective practice:

The Open University (no date) suggests that the word 'reflective practice' comes from philosopher John Dewey and theorist Donald Schon. Dewey (1910, p.6) describes reflective practice as an active process of carefully questioning and evaluating any belief or knowledge by looking closely at the reasons behind it. Dewey also highlighted that reflection gives people foresight in their actions, helping them understand what they are doing and why. However, Schon (1983) proposes a slightly different perspective, suggesting that reflection has two elements to it. One element being "reflection-in-action", which involves quickly assessing and adjusting your approach whilst engaged in a task. The other element being "reflection-on-action", which takes place after something has happened, allowing you to revisit the situation, reflect in depth and change it for the future. Both Dewey and Schon's work led to numerous reflective models being created.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle Model



(Kolb,1984)

Gibbs' Reflective Learning Cycle Model

(Gibbs, 1988)

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

According to Lindon and Trodd (2016 pp. 73-75), Kolb's created a model that demonstrates the process of experiential learning. The model focuses on four different stages, which some people may find hard to understand due to the difficult language. Those include "concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation." "Concrete experience" refers to "an experience" of an event or situation. "Reflective observation" is the next part in the cycle, during this you set aside time to reflect on what you did or what has happened. The duration of this part of the cycle depends on the critical thinking skills you possess and how comfortable you are with stepping back from an experience. "Abstract conceptualisation" is the third stage, during this you will analyse your experience and use theories and general knowledge to solve the problem. Lastly is "active experimentation", which involves applying what you have learnt to similar situations to try and improve the outcome. However, Brock (2014 pp. 16-17) suggests Gibbs' reflective learning cycle might be a bit simpler to follow as it is made up of 6 stages with simple language. The stages in this consist of "description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and action plan." So firstly, you would describe what happened, next you would describe how it made you feel, then you would reflect on what was good or bad about it, after that you would focus on why it happened, perhaps using research to support you, next you would figure out what you have learnt from the experience and lastly you would think about what you would do different next time. Brock also points out that depending on the topic, Kolb's model can span across "days, weeks or months". It can also include many different things making it more difficult to understand, whereas Gibbs' model is easier to work around as you describe it, analyse the process and plan your actions for the future. Kolb's model is based on the idea that we use actual experiences to better our understanding, whereas Gibbs' model is based on reflecting in the moment and reflecting on action. Both Kolb's and Gibbs' models demonstrate that observing and reflecting on our practice can encourage a different mindset that enhances our approach on how to handle future situations.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Kolb's model helps individuals to understand the process of reflecting during an experience as it is based on the idea that we use actual experiences to enhance our understanding, whereas Gibbs' model helps individuals to reflect after the experience has taken plan as it emphasises reflecting on past actions. Both Kolb's and Gibbs' models are beneficial for helping individuals understand their own thinking and their approach to learning. They encourage us to avoid jumping to conclusions and support us in slowing down our thinking process. Both cycles allow you to learn from things you did well or things you may not have done well, and help you plan for better outcomes in the future. Even though reflective cycles can be very beneficial reflecting during or after an experience is not always easy as there could potentially be barriers in the way, for example, not having the time or support to reflect effectively.

3: Written Essay (1563 words)

According to Cambridge Dictionary (no date), a professional is an individual who has had special training or education and possesses the skills to do their job efficiently. The term professional also applies to individuals in respected roles due to their high level of education, as well as those who are paid to work in a job that others may see as hobbies, for example, a professional dancer or professional singer. Gasper (2015) discusses “Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)” and states that a professional goes beyond just having formal qualifications. For practitioners working in “ECEC”, there is a bigger focus on the personal qualities and ethical values that the practitioner would bring. A key part of this is “principled practice”, which is based on ethical values that put the needs of the children and families first, and then having professionals support this. When these personal qualities are combined with “theoretical knowledge” about children's development, it leads to better outcomes in “ECEC”. Skills for Care (no date) suggests that whether we realise it or not, we all go about our daily lives guided by a set of values that influence our thoughts and actions. Values are the ideas and beliefs about how people should behave, which have been shaped by many things, such as, an individual's upbringing, their family, their relationships or education, or their culture and religion. Although everyone has their own individual values, there are specific values that are important for a practitioner working in a care setting. Powell (2010, pp. 213-215) notes that someone who wants to work in an early year's setting must be enthusiastic and energetic, and they also need to genuinely enjoy working with children and supporting in their development. They must be confident with their communication skills when interacting with children, parents or carers. Having confidence, patience and professionalism are essential, along with having a caring, supportive, and understanding attitude. Being able to collaborate with both parents and children is crucial, as is committing to promote social inclusion. As well as work effectively in a team and be keen to take part in any necessary training. A playful and fun-loving spirit is also important to create an engaging environment for children. These qualities can be considered values, as they represent the beliefs and principles that influence behaviour in early years settings. Taylor and Woolley (2013 p.189) describe how teachers have a

variety of values that shape their views and approach to education. These values often include respect, tolerance, community and empathy, which then guide how they interact with students. They emphasise that understanding values is critical, especially when it comes to children's rights. It is crucial to ensure that young people are given the opportunity to express themselves and have their voices acknowledged, as by holding these values, teachers can better support and fulfil their role. This makes values fundamental to effective educational practice. Communication and relationships are also extremely important when it comes to professional practice and meeting the needs of children. Forming strong relationships early on is essential for a child's well-being, learning and cognitive growth. As a practitioner, building connections and communicating with both children and their families is vital for helping children feel secure and ensuring their needs are understood and met (Department of Education, 2021). Letting parents and caregivers be a part of their child's learning is key for a child's success. Building a collaborative relationship by welcoming parents, inviting them to share about their child's background, culture and/or their needs and recognising them as the child's first educator fosters trust and makes the setting more inclusive. Including parents in the settling in period and offering various opportunities for involvement, for example, daily chats, volunteer roles or workshops, helps overcome barriers and creates a shared approach to supporting the child's development and learning (Department of Education, 2024). It is essential to have a thorough knowledge and understanding of professional practice, and key aspects of safeguarding when working in a childcare setting, as this ensures practitioners can effectively protect and support children's wellbeing. Safeguarding Wales (no date) suggests that safeguarding involves taking measures to prevent and protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse or neglect, as well as educating those in their environment to recognise potential signs and risks. The NSPCC (2024) aligns with this and notes that "children have the right to be protected from harm." Any workplace that is involved with working with children must have a safeguarding policy in place, which contains how they will "keep children safe" and how they will report any "children protection concerns." Social Care Wales (2022) states that everyone is responsible for safeguarding. The Act improves

safeguarding practices in Wales to help people live fulfilling lives. It requires that the well-being of individuals needing care and support is prioritised and includes protecting them from abuse and neglect. For children, well-being means ensuring their safety and supporting their growth in physical, emotional, social, and other areas. Partnership and multi-agency working is also very important to professional practice. Walker (2018) states that working in partnership and multi-agency is when numerous practitioners from various agencies and lines of work all come together with a joint goal of trying to understand and answer or improve a problem. This is confirmed by Training Express (2023) who notes that the main aim of multi-agency working is to recognise and prevent the various issues that can negatively impact a child's growth and learning. Effective communication is essential for successful multi-agency working, as it promotes positive collaboration between organisations. Good communication allows all practitioners to share ideas and knowledge, which is crucial for keeping children safe and supporting their well-being. Strong working relationships and teamwork are also needed for successful results. Practitioners from different agencies need to build positive working relationships so they can share new ideas and achieve their goals more quickly. Team members who have good working relationships feel included, valued, and trusted, this then encourages them to share their skills and knowledge, which leads to better support for children. Multi-agency working also allows practitioners to share their best practices and experiences, which gives others a better understanding of children's well-being, and allows practitioners to develop in their roles. Working in a partnership approach is much more effective than individual agencies working alone, as it helps spot safeguarding concerns in children early, which then reduces the risk of future problems. Birth To Five Matters (no date) discusses “observations, assessments and planning cycle (OAP)”, and explains how this also guides professionals in their practice and supports practitioners in meeting the needs of children. This continuous assessment plays an essential role in children’s education. It involves practitioners observing children taking part in various activities, then analysing the observation and figuring out what they have learnt about the child, and then using what they have learnt to plan the next steps for said child, which will then meet the child's needs and push them on in their learning.

The Welsh Assembly Government (2008) agrees with this as they state that observing and assessing activities reveal the developing skills, knowledge, and preferences of children. These observations and assessments can help practitioners in many ways, for example, help them plan for individual progress and communicate these achievements and next steps to children and parents, or it can help provide targeted support for children who have been observed making little progress. It is essential that practitioners understand child development and children's needs, because by carefully observing children's progress, involvement, and enjoyment, they can plan a curriculum tailored to individual needs. Even though not all observations will aid in planning for next steps, they will all benefit in seeing a holistic view of the child. According to BBC (no date) numerous countries have committed to safeguarding the rights specified in "The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)". 54 articles of rights make up the UNCRC and they discuss what every child is entitled to. It was created in 1989 and is another essential key to informing professional practice. Children's Rights Wales (no date) notes that the UNCRC consists of four key principles which state that all children and young people; must not face discrimination, should have their best interests prioritised, have the right to survive and develop and should be able to express their opinions and have them taken seriously. The principles are important for effectively using the UNCRC in practice. The key principles of the *Children Act 1989* align with aspects of the UNCRC, for example, protecting children from harm and respecting their race, culture, and ethnicity. The legislation's aim is to ensure that children's health and developing needs are addressed, including their protection from harm. Both the UNCRC and Children Act 1989 provide a legal and ethical framework that guides practitioners in their practice. They also help practitioners explain and achieve the rights and principles outlined, and support them in providing a more effective, rights-based support to children. To conclude, the different aspects of professional practice, for example, effective communication, observations and assessments, and in-depth knowledge and understanding, are vital in meeting the individual and inclusive needs of children. By creating an inclusive environment, it allows children to thrive. Making these practices a priority not only enhances academic success, but also helps shape a society that values

diversity and inclusion, which highlights the essential role practitioners play in nurturing the holistic child.

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