

Personal Development Plan

Part 1:

What do I want to develop: I would like to take up leadership responsibilities and develop my presentation skills, to communicate clearly and confidently, so that I can engage my audience and inspire them. I would also like to develop my professional skills and knowledge further, to enhance self-confidence and develop my competence in caring for young children.

Objective	Specific action steps (How will I achieve this objective/ what needs to be done?)	Resources (What support and resources are needed to achieve this objective?)	Target Date for achieving objective	Success criteria (How will I know I have achieved this goal; how will I review this?)
<i>Complete Bachelor of Arts degree: Early Years Education and Care: Early Years Practitioner Status</i>	1. Attend my lectures and take notes 2. Read up on any relevant information 3. Ensure good time management, to complete tasks by the required deadlines 4. Ensure to find and use reliable sources 5. Prioritise my health and well-being	1. Prioritise my time and tasks, using my academic diary 2. Look for relevant books and dedicate some time to reading them 3. Self-reflect, to ensure good practice and development 4. Read through the assignment handbook before my lecture and study referencing formats 5. Create a family planner, to balance study, hobbies, meals, and sleep	31 July, 2025	Degree certificate and graduation Check my academic diary regularly, to record my progress and set new goals Review feedback from assignments and self-reflect, to enhance my study skills Update my family planner and review this regularly, to ensure I prioritise my health, family time and study time
<i>Complete level three in safeguarding</i>	1. Attend a level three safeguarding course, during Early Years Employability Week 2. Complete the course while demonstrating enthusiasm	1. Liase with the Early Years team, to confirm the date and time of the level three safeguarding course, in order to enroll 2. Find out how much the course will cost and put money aside for it in advance	January, 2024	Level three safeguarding certificate Keep well-informed and knowledgeable of safeguarding procedures Keep up to date with safeguarding courses and training

<i>Build confidence and improve public speaking skills</i>	1. Read up on literature and practice in front of my close friends and family 2. Present in front of a small team of colleagues and ask for constructive feedback 3. Conduct Read Write Inc sessions for small groups of children at school and deliver part of a lesson, whilst being supervised by my teacher, to gain essential feedback 4. Present in front of a large group of people, at an organised event	1. Look for relevant books at the library and dedicate time to reading them. 2. Seek help from my peers and ask them for advice, ideas, and thoughts on my performance. 3. Collaborate with my teacher, to gain essential knowledge of Read Write Inc and read up on pupil's progress reports, to gain an understanding of their development, current levels, and potential barriers 4. Collaborate with Wales Netball and Llanelli Netball League, to put myself forward for tutoring and public speaking	22 March, 2024	Marks and exam board decisions Lecturer assessments at work placement and feedback Successful completion of large group presentations Self-reflect after completion of each task and use the feedback and reflection observations, to improve and prepare for the next task
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What is reflection and reflective practice?

Canning (2010) states that reflection is when individuals investigate their experiences and consider a range of methods, to enhance and develop themselves as professionals, as well as the delivery of an authentic, comprehensive curriculum. Canning (2010) also believes that reflection allows practitioners to adapt to new concepts, which helps them to become more understanding and relatable to children's needs.

Reflective practice is a periodic function, which enables practitioners to establish the relationship, between one experience and another. It also inspires them to work collaboratively, allowing them to share optimal strategies and improve their confidence (Cambridge International Education, n.d.).

Newcastle University (n.d.) claims that reflective practice is a system, which motivates people to consider their standard practices, recognise potential barriers and establish ways, to enhance their techniques. They also feel it helps them to adapt to new methods of learning and to become more acceptable to failure, which promotes resilience.

Why is reflective practice important to Early Years?

Lindon and Trodd (2016) state that reflective practice is vital, to encourage lifelong learning and to construct and conserve an early year's practice that is self-sufficient and adaptable to change. Lindon and Trodd (2016) also suggest that reflective practice promotes the safeguarding of children, as it helps individuals to question and eliminate irregularities, which could be detrimental to children's education and welfare.

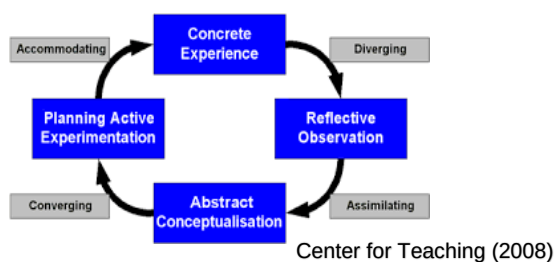
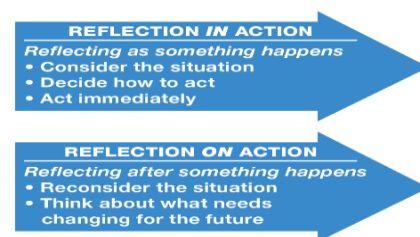
Reflective practice improves the standard of care and schooling for both, children, and families. By reflecting and adopting a curious approach, it enables practitioners to welcome children's input, generate positive experiences with their best interests at heart and ensure they are prioritised, valued and heard (Reed and Walker, 2015)

Brock (2015) believes that reflective practice enhances a practitioner's communication and thinking skills, as well as their personal growth and cognitive abilities. These skills, are the ethics and principles of professionals and are vital, to develop specialist expertise (Brock, 2015).

The theory of reflective practice

Dewey (1933) believes that knowledge is firmly established in action and that the root of reflection, originates from uncertainty, delay, and a lack of comprehension, in relation to experiences. Dewey (1933) maintains that reflection is an intentional and active process, where individuals should look back and reflect on an experience, pose questions to explore the results, and consider the actions which could have led to a more improved outcome. This will ensure progression and growth.

Boud *et al.* (1985) argue that experience alone, is not fundamental to the learning process. They allege that for reflection to be effective, the emotions that correlate to experiences, must also be considered. Therefore, Boud *et al.* (1985) are convinced that by being oblivious to the influence of emotions, the reflective process could well be inadequate.

Kolb's model**Schon's model**

Al-Amrani (2021)

Analysis of models

According to Brown (n.d.) Kolb's model of reflection, is based on experiences being explored and critiqued, to reflect on challenging situations and convert them into positives, via retrospective technique. This process then enables practitioners to develop their professional skills and ensures best practice. While Schon's model of reflection, as stated by Walshe (2022), is based on experiences being reflected upon, both during and after they transpire, as part of an in-action and on-action process.

Edshare Southampton (n.d.) state that Kolb examined the components of reflection and developed a framework for the learning cycle based on these, which have four components. Kolb brings up a crucial point. People typically prefer to complete one aspect of the learning cycle above all others. As long as the other areas are maintained at a certain level of proficiency, this is usually not an issue. On the other hand, if people start to strongly favour one aspect of the cycle, people might ignore and become stagnant in the other aspects. This may lead to a biased learning process. Thus, in order to guarantee thorough learning, it is imperative to maintain a level of competence throughout the entire learning cycle. However, Schön established a stronger connection between professional practice and professional development. Schon argued that practitioners can make unexpressed knowledge, explicit through reflection. The theory underlying what practitioners frequently do out of instinct, is this knowledge. Furthermore, practitioners can use this new knowledge, to enhance their work and advance their level of expertise. Schön distinguished between two kinds of reflection: reflection in action, and reflection on action. Schon also suggested that practitioners can build on earlier experiences and scenarios, by repeatedly engaging in the process of reflecting on action. This results in the development of a large repertoire of practiced interventions, which helps the skilled practitioner to react quickly and intuitively in the right way, when novel or unexpected situations arise in the workplace (Edshare, Southampton, (n.d.).

According to StudyPrism (2023) Kolb's model is an easy-to-understand and straightforward procedure. Due to the model's adaptability and versatility, it can serve as a helpful introduction to structured self-reflection, in a variety of contexts and aids in the improvement of self-analysis. However, it is overly simplistic and disregards other people's viewpoints and any other kind of input. Additionally, it ignores other non-reflective learning strategies and reflection, while acting (StudyPrism, 2023). Schon's model is not only a post-processing procedure, but it can be completed while working. Individuals can also think more deeply about their experiences, which is an advantage, if they do not have much time to reflect on them afterwards. If overused, however, it could divert people's attention from the current task and should be used in conjunction with other models. Shon's model is also impractical, for individuals with hectic schedules (StudyPrism, 2023).

Conclusion

This assignment has critically analysed the effectiveness of reflection and reflective practice and discussed the importance, as well as the potential barriers of reflective models.

The first key point to highlight, is that reflection is crucial for practitioners to be able to hone their abilities in self-directed learning, boost their drive, and deliver higher-quality care. Reflection is also vital, for practitioners to develop as professionals, to build important relationships with multi-agencies and to place the education, welfare, and safety of children first.

The arguments presented also indicate that, regardless of a difference of opinions, both Kolb and Schon viewed the reflective process, as a way to ensure exemplary practice and as an essential element in experimental learning.

Part 3: Written Essay

What does it mean to be a professional?

The definition of a professional, is someone who possesses the knowledge, abilities, and competence required of them in their line of work and profession. A professional in early childhood education ought to be calm, patient, and sympathetic. Professionals should also be passionate about working with children and have a nonjudgmental attitude, as well as possessing outstanding verbal and nonverbal communication abilities (Early Years Matters, 2021).

Brock (2015) believes that working with young children, requires a professional to possess not only the necessary credentials, training, expertise, knowledge, and experience, but also attitudes, values, ideologies, and beliefs, as well as a code of ethics. Professionals should have the freedom to determine what is best for the children and their families, devotion, enjoyment, and passion for the work. Working with young children as a professional, demands more than just satisfying requirements; it also requires having the right mindset and passion (Brock, 2015).

Professionals take their work seriously and respect their colleagues, whose work ultimately depends on them, by adhering to deadlines and schedules. A professional behaves and speaks with integrity due to their understanding that taking short cuts, might have unfavourable outcomes and that openness is necessary for a productive workplace (Patterson, 2018).

What is professional practice?

Ensuring that every child receives the maximum benefit from their Early Years experiences, is the essence of effective practice. Only when adults collaborate to get to know the children, which can encourage play, growth, and learning will this result be realised. By collaborating across services, practitioners can offer more direct involvement or information referrals to parents, as well as offering professional support and guidance to each other. Everybody's input will have an impact on the education and growth of the children (Early Years Matters, 2023).

Early Years Matters (2023) also state that in early childhood education, communication and relationships are critical because they help children develop strong, independent character traits. Key communication and relationships also help practitioners to become more perceptive and accommodating of their students' needs, emotions, and interests. The diversity of people and communities is acknowledged and valued in the early years. No family or child faces discrimination. This effectively means that all children, regardless of their abilities, race, or religion, should receive fair treatment. It is predicated on the idea that every child has the right to live a full life, in

circumstances that enable them to participate in society and grow into unique individuals, with distinct cultural and spiritual identities. In addition to actively promoting equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practices, this helps children, to recognise the qualities that set them apart from other children and help them feel safe, included, and valued. This entails paying attention to families and engaging in delicate back-and-forth communication. Knowing when and how to get expert assistance as soon as possible is important, when the situation calls for it.

A practitioner must possess extensive knowledge and comprehension, to protect and promote the welfare of young children, have effective communication and engagement skills with children, families, and multi-agency groups, and stay current with training, certifications, and legal requirements. It is also critical to comprehend how youth develop, while keeping diversity and equality in mind, to know when to step in within an integrated workplace, and to comprehend how to best support those who are most vulnerable to marginalisation or underachievement (Children's Workforce Development Council, 2010).

To obtain a comprehensive picture of a child's circumstances and develop a coordinated support plan, practitioners must collaborate with multi-agencies. This also enables practitioners to recognise all hazards, to which a child may be exposed and take the necessary precautions to keep them safe (NSPCC Learning, 2023).

What are the values of a professional practitioner?

Since the welfare of children comes first, a professional practitioner ought to uphold and support the principles for the children's workforce. Practitioners should actively promote their care, growth, education, health, and general well-being, and every facet of their work should reflect this. To make sure that what they do, is in the best interests of the children under their care, a professional practitioner must be trustworthy, courteous, accountable for their decisions and actions, and able to reflect on their work. The relevant laws, regulations and guidelines should also be followed, and professionals must uphold confidentiality and refrain from giving away personal information to outside parties, unless doing so would best serve the child's interests (PACEY, n.d.).

Mushens (2019) argues that whether on purpose or accidentally, a practitioner's input can occasionally lead to fantastic outcomes not happening, which can sabotage the results. Mushens (2019) believes that professional decisions may be questioned, when a practitioner's beliefs and values clash with those of the children, families, and multi-agency groups.

The importance of the observation, assessment, and planning cycle

The child initiates practice, which develops through collaboration. Observation, listening to the child, and relationship-building are the first steps in effective practice. Expertise in child development

facilitates comprehending a child's interests, growth, and learning as well as making future decisions. By collaborating with other professionals and establishing connections with community and support groups, it becomes easier to understand the needs and rights of the child and all those involved. Making well-informed, unbiased decisions regarding a child's growth, learning, and progress is essential during the observation, assessment, planning, and summative assessment cycles. It is a contemplative, continuous process that makes it possible to think about how children develop and how best to support each child individually (Birth To 5 Matters, 2020).

Birth To 5 Matters (2020) also state that it is crucial for practitioners, to take a step back and reflect, to create an assessment of learning, which enables them to record a child's development. This process is a great way to reflect professionally, have conversations with colleagues, and moderate decisions about progress, to gain a deeper understanding of how children learn in all domains. A comprehensive overview will focus on the development of attitudes and learning dispositions in the child, as well as their emotional health and relationships, in addition to their knowledge and skill sets. Practitioners can make strategic use of the data, to aid the child's development further and enhance practice and provision. To help guide conversations with parents, other agencies, or professionals involved with the child and family, information can be succinctly and clearly communicated. It is possible to support transitions so that children's learning and development journeys go smoothly.

Illumine (n.d.) points out that the observation, assessment, and planning cycle, could be more difficult to maintain objectivity and remember important details that are essential for tracking behaviours, or gauging growth, the longer practitioners put off recording their spontaneous observation data. Illumine (n.d.) suggests that it could possibly get increasingly difficult, the longer it takes to obtain accurate data and that it might be challenging for practitioners, to find the ideal balance between spending time with the children in their care and knowing when to stand back and observe.

The principles of the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child (UNCRC) and why it is important, for practitioners to have a good knowledge and understanding of children's rights

The four general principles of the UNCRC are: Non-Discrimination, best interests of the child/children, the right to survival and development and the views of the child. These four guiding concepts, help shape societal perceptions of children and their rights. These principles are predicated on the idea that children are equal to adults. Every child has the right to pursue their interests without ever facing discrimination and the best interest of the child, should always be priority. Children have the right to live, be safe, and have their say on how their lives are formed. State members are required to do everything within their power, to guarantee the child's survival and growth and should have the freedom, to voice any opinions on any issue that affects children (Unicef, 2019).

Unicef (2019) also maintain that it is important to make sure that the voices of children and young people are heard that children are permitted to participate in all facets of their lives when it is safe to do so, that children's rights are upheld, and everyone who interacts with children and young people

are aware of their needs. Practitioners should have a sound knowledge and understanding of children's rights, so this enables them to ensure the safeguarding of the children in their care and assist in the development of a child's education, which will give them the mandate to change the world for the better and explore their full potential. This information links in with articles 2, 3, 4, 6, 12, 13 and 19 of the UNCRC list of rights.

Conclusion

This assignment has critically examined, the effectiveness and significance of various professional practice facets, as well as their importance in addressing children's unique and inclusive needs.

To guarantee best practice, practitioners must maintain current training and certifications and have the necessary knowledge, skills, values, expertise, and code of ethics. Practitioners must also ensure that self-reflection is a habit, as the only way to be at the top of their game, is to draw lessons from the past and apply them to the future.

The second key point to highlight, is that the welfare of children comes first, therefore, working collaboratively with coworkers, children, families, and multi-agencies is pivotal, to the safeguarding, education, and growth of children.

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