

WHAT IS REFLECTION AND REFLECTIVE PRACTICE?

Imagine being able to relive one day of your life again and again. When an individual goes through the front door, they are met with a time machine that can transport them back to that one horrific day and allow them to relive it. They make use of this time to reflect on everything that went wrong and what they could do to correct it, as well as to try to replicate the things that went well. This may not appear to be reflective practice, but it is the process of reflecting on our experiences in order to learn from them in the future. According to Lindon and Trodd (2016), reflective practice is a process of deep consideration and positive detailed evaluation of current practice that leads to a knowledgeable assessment of strengths and well-thought-out strategies for change that will result in improvements. Reflection is a key skill for early childhood educators. In this context, reflection examines oneself, one's viewpoints, traits, experiences, and behaviour. It assists us in gaining understanding and determining how to proceed (Lindon and Trodd, 2016).

Writing is a standard method of reflection. Hence, it helps us go deeper into our thoughts and develop them more methodically. It can, however, take the shape of a discussion with other individuals. The early childhood workforce is undergoing constant change, and it is becoming increasingly important for practitioners to be reflective for them to build a multi-professional partnership. Brookfield (1995 cited in Hallet, 2013) states that the goal of reflective practice is to provide children and their families with high-quality experiences. Practitioners can enhance their professional practice by making informed judgments about whether what they are doing with children and families is effective or not when they participate in reflection. Schon (2007 cited in Thompson and Thompson, 2018) states that there are two types of reflection that are relevant in the development of professional practice: reflection in action and reflection on action. Reflection in action will enable the practitioner to reflect on what is happening and make decisions and modifications in their actions based on previous experiences. For example, a practitioner can take notes while observing to see if he/she picks up on anything in the situation. Whereas reflection on the action will allow the practitioner to reflect on what was done afterward, it will also enable the practitioner to make modifications based on the knowledge received. For example, a practitioner can write in his/her journal where they think they might have gone wrong or right in the situation. Practitioners will build on prior knowledge by connecting it to present and future practice in both cases. In other words, in order to effect good change, practitioners will take a step back from their teaching method, assess it, and extract meaning from it. Reed and Canning (2010) state that as practitioners, we can manage our perceptions of the world around us by using reflection as a foundation.

Reflection within the Early Years Setting

It is good to stop and reflect at the beginning of a new academic year. Practitioners have to reflect on what happened during the last academic year and where their strengths and weaknesses lie in order to improve on those. These changes require reflection so that as practitioners in the early years setting we can reflect on what works, change what does not, and continue to develop and enhance children's teaching and learning experiences. Practitioners can consider how they communicate with children, parents, and one another in an early years setting. When reflecting, practitioners need to be in partnership with not just each other but also with parents and children and other multi-agencies for reflection to be effective. . This will allow them to share their observations and opinions with each other and other multi agencies (Paige-Smith and Craft, 2011). For example, as a practitioner, you observe a child in mathematical activity and see him struggling. The practitioner can now communicate with other practitioners to see if they have ever experienced this kind of problem and reflect on what was done wrong and see how they can work together to resolve this problem. Working in partnerships allows needs to be satisfied both collectively and individually, allowing families' needs to be served in a cohesive way (Gasper, 2010). Furthermore, Hallet (2014) says that

REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER AND REFLECTION WITHIN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE:

Reflective practice is concerned with personal achievement; however, when paired with continuing professional development (CPD), it becomes a tool for practitioners to extend their knowledge and abilities in order to maintain and develop proficiency throughout their careers (Social Care Wales, 2017). Reflective practice can be extended to professional reflective practice in the early years. This distinguishes between personal reflective practices associated with a practitioner's professional development. However, reflective practice is limited to your personal development within the early years setting. On the other hand, professional reflective practice helps to broaden this concept by incorporating all of the factors that affect your position as a practitioner and on which practitioners can reflect (Roffey and Malthouse, 2013). Samuelson and Carlsson (2008 cited in Hallet, 2013) state that the beginning point for reflection should be where the child is, to observe the world through the eyes of a young child.

Furthermore, practitioners need to be able to identify children's individual needs and build on those specific needs ((Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, 2008). That is to say that reflective practice involves practitioners engaging in a continual cycle of self-observation and self-evaluation to better understand their own knowledge and the knowledge they elicit in themselves and their children. On the other hand, professional practitioners can increase their knowledge by reflecting on their experiences. According to Moon (2004 cited in Brock, 2014), professionals' basic principles include reflection and reflective practice, which play an essential role in professional development. Practitioners are encouraged to observe children in a playful and secure setting so that they may observe, assess, and plan activities according to the child's level. In this context, practitioners will better understand the child's individual needs since the children will feel safe (Child Care Technical Assistance Network, 2017). This also allows the practitioner to reflect on what they saw and heard throughout the observation. Furthermore, this would allow them to create growth possibilities for each child based on that reflection (Brodie and Savage, 2015). Professionals can apply their knowledge and understanding by reflecting on their experience, promoting the practice, and professional service improvements. By reflecting on their work, practitioners can identify learning barriers that children may have and develop strategies that will help them. HCPC (2019) states that practitioners can use reflection to help them improve the way they operate or the level of care they provide to others. If mistakes are made, multi-professional partnerships should be encouraged to reflect and share what transpired openly and honestly. These essential reflection experiences contribute to the development of professional practitioners and practice.

by reflecting with other professionals, parents, and children, we can incorporate the capacity to complete tasks and share knowledge and experience, explain, provide helpful advice, and accept feedback from others, allowing us to think critically and enhance practice.

Models and Theorists of Reflection

Reflective practice has different working models. They all have the same fundamental goal; to acquire the best learning results for both the practitioner and the children. Each model of reflection seeks to break down learning in order to establish connections. The two main models of reflection are Kolb's and Gibbs's reflective cycles.

University of Cambridge (2021) states that Kolb's reflective cycle was created in 1984. This approach, which is based on beliefs about how individuals learn, focuses on the concept of building knowledge through real-life experiences and includes four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. On the other hand, The University of Edinburgh (2020) states that Graham Gibbs created the Gibbs Reflective Cycle in 1988 to structure learning from experiences. It provides a framework for analyzing experiences. Because of its cycle character lends itself well to repeated encounters, allowing individuals to learn and prepare from things that went well or wrong. It is divided into six stages: description of the situation, thoughts and feelings about the experience, evaluation of the incident, and both positive and negative, analysis of the case to make sense of it, and finally, consider what you've learned and what you may have done differently. Make a strategy for how you'll handle such events in the future, or make any other changes you think are necessary.

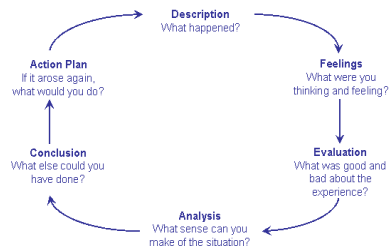
When practitioners do reflection there are pros and cons that go along with these reflections. According to the University of Cambridge (2021) reflection provides a structure to follow, this will allow practitioners to be able to have a guideline to follow when doing reflection especially if it is their first time doing a reflection. Another benefit is that it provides a good beginning place for individuals who might not be sure where to start. While there are pros to doing a reflection there are also downfalls in doing them. Whereas there are different models different situations may not work with different models; models may not be applicable in all cases. Practitioners would need to be able to identify the model that would work with the position they are dealing with. Another pro is that the process of reflective practice is continuous. This means that practitioners should not do reflection only once it should be done daily.

John Dewey presented the idea of reflective thinking. He saw that when an individual starts thinking of something a problem always arises. Subsequently, they are left with a sensation of vulnerability or disquiet and need to pause and check out the circumstance. At this stage, they recognize the specific idea of the issue, what it was that they were endeavouring to do, what they really did, and what occurred (Roffey-Barentsen and Malthouse, 2013). Dewey argued that reflection might be very helpful in making sense of confusing or difficult-to-explain situations or experiences. He proposed that learning reflection includes recalling the incident and then asking questions to figure out why things went the way they did and what actions may have resulted in a different conclusion. Whereas Schön expanded on Dewey's ideas by linking reflection more closely to professional development and practice. Practitioners can make apparent, concealed (tacit) information by utilising reflection, according to Schön. This understanding is the idea that informs what practitioners perform on a daily basis. Furthermore, this new knowledge can assist practitioners in improving their profession and becoming more skilled at what they do. He also suggested that repeating the 'reflecting on action' approach might assist practitioners in building on past experiences (Brock, 2014).



(Source: Bukowska, No Date)

(Source: (NMC, 2021)



(Source: La Trobe University, 2019)

Terrant (2017) states that in order to make reflective practice more effective, practitioners can do an alternative vision that involves peer learning interactions. This will lead to the practitioner developing good plan-based activities and being able to communicate with their peers. Additionally, when practitioners are carrying out reflections they can use a reflective accounts form in order to help in their reflective process. This form can be used by practitioners to record five written reflective reports on their CPD and/or practice-related feedback, as well as an event or experience in a similar field in the past. This will also enable practitioners to have a recorded document on file in the case that in the future they or another individual experiences a similar situation; they can look back on how they handled the situation. In conclusion, reflection is an essential skill for all professionals working in early years setting. Practitioners who reflect ensure that both children and their parents have the optimum learning and experience possible. Furthermore, as a reflective practitioners, specialists who reflect may develop their own knowledge and professional practice. Practitioners may therefore incorporate reflection in action and reflection done on the action. This will allow them to recognize the needs of children and develop activities to meet those needs. Additionally, when practitioners are carrying out reflections they can use a reflective accounts form in order to help in their reflective process. This form can be used by practitioners to record five written reflective reports on their CPD and/or practice-related feedback, as well as an event or experience in a similar field in the past. This will also enable practitioners to have a recorded document on file in the case that in the future they or another individual experiences a similar situation; they can look back on how they handled the situation.

In conclusion, reflection is an essential skill for all professionals working in early years setting. Practitioners who reflect ensure that both children and their parents have the optimum learning and experience possible. Furthermore, as a reflective practitioners, specialists who reflect may develop their own knowledge and professional practice. Practitioners may therefore incorporate reflection in action and reflection done on the action. This will allow them to recognize the needs of children and develop activities to meet those needs.

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