

Reflection on Early Years Practice

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Element 2- Reflective log

The activity I decided was to paint mini beasts such as lady- birds, bees, butterflies, spiders and earth- worms onto rocks from the garden. Firstly, we all sat down and read the book 'Twist and Hop, Minibeast Bop!' (Mitton, 2016), after reading this we collected rocks together from outside and also looked for some mini beasts. We chose rocks that had a large enough surface area for them to paint. I was working with three children aged between four and five years old, the recommend ratio between four and eight year olds is one adult to six children (NSPCC, 2019).

For this activity I set three aims to achieve. To help me achieve these goals I used the SMART acronym, which helped me view my progression and gave me specific objectives to work towards (Rouse, 2013) The first aim was to get the children to gain fine and gross motor skills from outdoor learning, An objective I set to achieve this aim was to get the children to pick up rocks from outside as this helps develop their gross motor skills. Another objective was to have the children pick up worms and bugs as it helps their fine motor skills as well as teaching them to respect nature and the environment around them. My second aim was to boost the children's creativity skills. To achieve this I set the objectives of painting on rocks and the personal objective of being supportive (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008). My final aim was to boost the children's science skills. To achieve this goal I set the objectives of identifying and naming the variety of different mini beasts and also use their observation and own ideas to answer questions (The Ecology Service, 2010).

My role as the leader was to encourage the development of their learning and to ensure health and safety was in check. As the leader of the activity I had planned before hand to ensure that I included what they needed to accomplish and also needed to ensure that the resources I needed were available. I also had to take pictures of the children doing the activity and their work for evidence of them completing the task. Whilst doing the activity I needed to ensure that everything was in a safe and supportive environment. I created a risk assessment, which enabled me to put in place control measures. By doing this I had to identify the hazards and had to put something in place to control the risk. During the activity I had to check their previous knowledge on the topic so that I could improve their learning by teaching them what

they did not know. My role as the leader was to also ensure I gave time for the students to reflect on the activity so that I was able to know what they learnt as well as what they enjoyed (Hawkins and Rogers, 2016).

A positive aspect of the activity was that the children were gaining new knowledge about different types of mini beasts. Another aspect was that the children were outdoor learning, which is engaging for children in many different ways. Some benefits for outdoor learning is that it lets the children experience the real world by developing their skills, understanding and knowledge in a important context. The outdoor environment is stimulating their creative thinking as well as giving opportunity to challenge their reflection and critical thinking (Education Scotland, 2007). Another positive aspect is that a hand's on activity is that it is engaging and fun. From hands on activities there is opportunities to engage different areas of the brain, the exploration of their five senses, improving their fine motor skills and gross motor skills and they used natural resources, which makes them aware of their environment (Welsh Assembly Government, 2009). Another positive aspect is that the children listened to the story as it improves their language skills and also helps develop their creative thinking and imagination as there were visual aids such as pictures in the book and the mini beasts we found outside (Gibb, 2016).

Throughout the activity there were some challenging aspects that I had encountered. I found that it was difficult to find rocks that had a big enough surface for the children to paint on as their fine motor skills have not developed enough to put in detail (Foundation Phase Framework, 2015). Another challenge was finding appropriate paint that would not wash off the rocks but wouldn't stain clothes.

Through the activity there were many values that were demonstrates such as responsibility as I had to ensure that the children were safe and also make sure I was encouraging throughout the activity. Another value that was demonstrated was open-mindedness; I felt this was important, as it helps you learn and grow (Collins English Dictionary, 2019). I also gained new skills such as leadership; I gained this skill from taking control to ensure that all the children were safe and that the activity worked well. Another skill I gained was time management, as I had to ensure each child had

an equal amount of time to complete the activity. During the activity I have gained new knowledge by effectively communicating and engaging with the children.

In a setting everyone that is working with children should do what is best for them (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2019). As well as this it is good for a setting to be reflective as it helps children and practitioners to develop and become better (Clark's, 1986). In schools there should be the opportunity to for the children to reflect to help the teacher understand what they need to know and what they need to improve on (Hawkins and Rogers, 2016). When students are critically self-reflecting they are developing critical thinking skills and self-knowledge (Rosche and Jason, 2011). De Bono's (2009) six thinking hats can be used to help reflect in a setting, this reflection model can be used in a team, which helps you look at different perspectives.

In conclusion, the activity was very successful however there were a few aspects I would change next time. The first would be to find pictures and names of the beasts we would most likely see so that the children have a visual representation as they found it difficult to identify some mini beasts. The second aspect would be to look for larger rocks to make it easier for the children to paint as the ones we chose were slightly too small.

Element 3- Importance of a reflective practice as a means of maintaining quality services for young children

What is reflection?

Reflection is looking back at an experience or issue and identifying how it can be solved or done in a different way. There are reflective cycles, which help an individual reflect by using the cycle and following the stages (Oxford Dictionary, 2019). Reflection is an important learning process to which an individual needs to undertake to improve or move from one experience to the next (Rodger, 2002).

Importance of reflection

Reflection is important to solve problems and also becomes a learning process. Reflection involves looking back at mistakes and failures as learning curves to improve (Forde, 2006). When reflecting on work or an issue, which has arose it will help to identify, understand, adjust and respond in an effective way (Korthagen, 2001).

Element of reflection

When considering reflection it is important to consider values, they are your principles and standards of behaviour. In a setting it is important to have professional values as they reflect the standards of the setting. It is also important that if lacking in values they should reflect and also look at what those values mean to that setting. As a professional teacher they should be honest as they are the example to the class, they should also have respect by being aware of the different religions, skills and ethnicities in the class. A teacher should also be patient as they can come across difficult situation such as where they have to take time to explain a topic (The New Times, 2017).

Element of reflection

When an individual is self-reflecting they will be also improving their critical thinking skills as well as developing self- knowledge (Rusche and Jason, 2011). **Critical thinking** is the analysis and the evaluation of an issue to form a judgement without allowing feelings and opinions to affect the decision. By being a critical thinker they are able to asses a situation or information and come up with well-reasoned conclusion and solution (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019; Cohen & Group, 2008). In a setting it is important to critically think, reflection helps to critically look at your professional and personal beliefs, attitude and values to improve in a setting (The National Strategies for Early Years, 2008).

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Model of reflection

Rolfe et al (2001) reflective model:

What? → So what? → What next?

This model is based on three questions, which can be altered to suit each individual in different situations. The first stage of this model is to look at **what** happened? And from that experience **what** would you like to analyse and improve on. The second stage is to look at **so what** does the experience means and **so what** other knowledge can be brought to this situation? For example Vygotsky (1978) theory could help with this question as he states that children learn from social interactions with a skilful other, also the more knowledgeable other refers to an individual who is at a higher ability level or has a better understanding. The third stage is to look at **now what** steps will need to be taken to improve and learn from the experience? For example: **What** is the problem? **So what** other knowledge can I bring to this situation? **Now what** do I need to do to improve the situation?

Model of reflection

Schon (1991) theory:

This theory states that there are two types of reflection, one during and one after an event or activity.

1. Reflection in action-When reflecting in action it includes thinking about what to do next or thinking on your feet.
2. Reflection on action- Thinking on action is thinking about something that has happened and thinking about what would be done differently next time.

Schon (1983) states that reflection in action is to reflect and act on an incident while it benefit that situation instead of reflecting in the future, this model could be more simple for children as they are able to reflect in the moment. When reflecting on action an individual would be looking back at the issue or event and thinking what could have been different and how.



(Source: CLIPARTMAX,
No Date)

A Good Practice

When reflecting in a practice a practitioner should be thinking about things such as if they have responded in the most effective way? What could have they done better? Was the experience good or bad? By asking these questions they will be reflecting and learning (John, 2013). Therefore by a student reflecting on their work it will encourage the teacher to understand what they know and what they need more time and help on. Reflecting will influence them to think of how to improve and move onto the next experience or problem (Hawkins and Rogers, 2016).

A good practice is important for children to learn and develop. In a practice there are some values that should be taken into account such as **integrity** as they should be honest and trust worthy practitioners, **respect** so they should listen, value and support, **caring** so that they are compassionate and approachable, **fair** to everyone so that they feel equal and be professional as practitioners need to work towards solving problems (Care inspector Wales, 2018). Another essential step to a good practice is considering Eco- schools (No date), they make a difference to raise awareness about the environment, this will show how reflecting on environmentally unfriendly habits and how as a school can they improve. Eco- schools also meets the Ofsted requirements and they emphasise the importance of the involvement of the pupils in the whole process (Ofsted, 2015).

In a practice that works with children should have the common core of skills and knowledge, this involves safeguarding and supporting the welfare of the child, effective communication and engagement of children and their families, supporting a transition, sharing information at appropriate times, multi agency working and supporting a child's development (Children's Workforce Development Council, 2010). Also a setting should critically think so that they are able to evaluate an issue with no feelings or opinions involves, a setting should also have values as it sets a standard and it is also very important that a setting is honest as it gives mutual respect and trust between student and teacher as well as school and guardians of the children (Children's Commissioner for Wales, No Date).

Professional Practitioner

A professional practitioner is someone who has learned everything they need about their field and will use a range of different techniques to suit the learner as well as supporting the learner (Qualified for life, 2014). As a reflective practitioner when promoting reflection in a classroom can help students to look back at what they need to improve, which is rewarding for both student and teacher. Also when teaching reflection activities they have the potential to help students improve in their academic performance (Ash et al, 2005). In a setting a professional practitioner critically reflects, as it is crucial for an evidence-based practice. As a professional practitioner they should also self reflect to give opportunities for improvements in the class room such as new techniques or ideas to encourage the children's learning and development (Qualified for life, 2014).

Mudiad Meithryn is an organisation that volunteers to provide an opportunity for young children to experience the benefits of early years care and education through the medium of Welsh. Next to this they provide a good learning outcome in a welsh medium setting by developing children's skills in creative development, knowledge and understanding of the world which can work alongside an Eco school, physical development, language, literacy and communication skills, mathematical development, personal and social development (Mudiad Meithryn, No date).

(Source: Vector Stock, No Date)

Estyn

Estyn is an organisation that inspects education and training in wales and they also inspect the quality and standards of a setting. Estyn works with Healthcare inspector Wales, Care and Social Services inspector for Wales and Wales Audit Office to ensure that practices are at their best. Also they provide guidance on a quality standards of education in wales, this could include reflecting on their own practice to look at how they should improve or how the setting should improve (Estyn, No date). In a setting it is important to have values and critical thinkers as it encourages a good standard setting.



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Conclusion

In conclusion, reflection is an important part in a practice as it helps improve any issues or problems that have accrued. It also gives an opportunity to look back with a different perspective so that you can realise what can be done better next time or what can be avoided. It is also good to reflect as it educates you on your performance, helps you improve and also gives you confidence to better your performance for the next time.

Element 4- Personal Development Plan

Area for further development (provide further details)	Why?	How?	Who/Where?	When?
1. Knowledge An area that I would like to further develop in is first aid training in St John ambulance Wales.	I feel that having the knowledge is important when working with young children as accidents happen and it is also a valuable skill to have.	I will sign up to the course that is in Ammanford, I would do the training over a few months, and they meet every Wednesday to train.	I will be attending the training in Ammanford St Johns centre (St John Cymru Wales, 2019).	December 2019
2. Knowledge Another area of knowledge, which I would want to develop, is doing a Social work course to get my social work degree.	I would like to apply for a social work course as I feel like it is rewarding as well as offering challenges.	To apply for the social work course I will go onto Swansea university website and apply online. I will need to look at what qualifications and grades that the course requires so that I can work towards them to ensure I get in.	The university I have chosen to apply for is Swansea University (No Date). I have chosen this university as it is close to where I live.	September 2020
3. Skills A skill which I feel I need to improve in is problem solving.	I feel that I struggle to problem solve and it is an important skill to have when working with children.	Evaluate the options and list the possible solutions that work best for me, as well as this I will ask for help from other teachers in my setting.	I will improve my problem solving in my school as I will get opportunities to be in a situation which needs me to problem solve as well as the help from others in an situation I am struggling.	July 2019
4. Skills Another skill that needs improvement is my leadership skills.	As I am in a setting I feel it is important to have a leadership skills as it help boost efficiency and achieve goals.	I will achieve this goal by being passionate and having a positive attitude while also listening and communicating effectively.	The school I volunteer in will help me gain my leadership skills as I have many opportunities such as taking classes out to do different activities as well as this I feel from volunteering with St Johns ambulance will also help me work towards this.	June 2019

5. Values A value that I feel I need to improve on is perseverance.	I feel that I do not persevere in every task that I set out to do due to lack of time. I would like to persevere in goals as well as in my setting.	Clarify my goal and base it on a purpose and if fails reflect and find a new way to achieve goal. As well as this I need to ensure I have enough time to do tasks by preparing my time before hand.	I will be achieving this in my setting.	August 2019
6. Values Another value, which I need to improve on, is my courage.	I feel that I need to improve on my courage as I need to persevere more ambitious goals and I feel that it is important value to have.	To achieve this I will put myself in more situations, which will give me the opportunity to speak out.	I will achieve this goal in University of Wales Trinity St David.	May 2019
7. A personal area, which I would like to develop in is my fitness, my goal is to run a 5k marathon.	I feel that it is an important cause, as well as this I would like to improve on my fitness. It will also help me work towards perseverance, as I will need to persevere in training.	I will be training three times a week before hand, the training I will be doing is in a gym as well as going around my area.	I will be doing the Swansea 5k marathon, Race for life- cancer research. This race is based in Swansea.	12th May 2019

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