

Reflective Practice

What is reflective practice?

According to Jasper (2003) reflective practice is the process of learning through experience. It is when an individual takes their experience and learns from it. By looking back on previous experiences it allows an individual to see what went well and how to improve next time. Reflective practice is seen as a vital skill for learning. Jasper (2003) believes that actioning the development will allow an improvement on an individual's skills and knowledge. He then developed a theory in 2013 with the ERA cycle. Jasper (2013) splits reflective practice into three stages starting with experience, followed by reflection then action. and describes these stages as a cycle that will continue to occur. This cycle can be both positive and negative but each comes alongside with developments. Furthermore, Bassot (2015) describes reflective practice as questioning approaches, challenging assumptions and gaining greater self awareness. He also points out that the ERA cycle can be applied in a variety of settings as an essential source of support for an individual to think about their practice on a deeper level. Similarly, Russell (2016) suggests that reflective practice is the process that allows significant professional progress. He believes it is a key strategy for professionals.

MacLeod-Brudenell et al. (2004) describe reflective practice as an individual asking themselves a series of questions based on their performance and understanding how to improve their actions. Likewise, Budworth and Hasemi (2015) believe reflective practice is an individual asking themselves multiple questions based on their performance in order to gain self development. They also state that they believe self reflection is a key stage in development. Although reflective practice can have many benefits, unfortunately there can be some negatives which include making the individual reflecting feel uncomfortable, self conscious and might not fully understand the reflective process. Also the process can be difficult which some individuals might find stressful. The reflective practice significant benefits definitely outweigh the negatives. Overall all of this points to the conclusion that reflective practice is vital for professional development and is important within many jobs such as early years.



ERA Cycle (Bristol CBT, No date)

Why is reflective practice important within the early years?

Reflective practice is vital for not only professional development, but also for the environment. This will provide the children in early years with the best environment they can achieve if reflective practice is followed. (Lindon and Trodd 2016). Indeed it is important to keep the child in mind. To ensure this, any improvements necessary need to be realistic whilst keeping the well-being of children the priority the entire time. Moreover, it has got to be considered that children look up to their practitioner as a role model. Reflective practice plays a key role in this as if the practitioner is improving and being the best they can be they will have a positive influence on the child. Additionally, Reed and Canning (2010) argue that reflective practice is important within an early years setting because parents and practitioners work alongside each other to meet the individual needs of the child. Carrying out reflective practice will ensure the child's needs are met to the best of their ability. MacLeod-Brudenell et al. (2004) argues that early years practitioners need to ensure they are self aware, capable of planning for the children taking into consideration all their needs while working alongside other practitioners in a team successfully and communicating effectively. Using reflective practice will allow these qualities to take place and any that are yet to happen will be noticed when reflecting. Attention to reflective learning is an important element working in early years as the knowledge that can come as a result of reflecting will benefit the children as well as the practitioner. (Brock, A. 2015). Practitioners are the facilitators and partners in the process of developing the child so reflecting and giving them the best knowledge they are capable of will reflect onto the early years children. Potter and Hodgson (2007) found that early year workers are motivated in giving the children the best opportunities they can, therefore it is crucial that the practitioners are able to

How can reflective practice support oneself to develop as a professional?

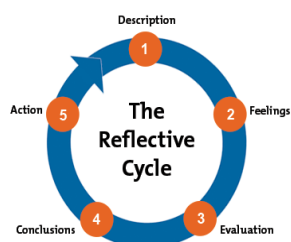
Reflective practice is essential for self-awareness as well as skill development. With this in mind, Lindon and Trodd (2016) reveal that if professionals remain unaware of their weaknesses not only will this reduce their professional development it will also result in the professional practice not developing. This will therefore allow professionals to make more active and better informed choices. Sugarman, et al. (2000) demonstrated the benefits of using reflection in a professional practice and the use of setting goals allows not only the individual but their setting to improve and achieve better. Claxton, (2003) states that "the practitioner is perceived here as an 'artist' and reflective practice as an art". This illustrates the value of carrying out reflective practice. It can be argued that reflective practice is important in a time of change. It ensures that the practitioner is maintaining up to date with current changes and this will form better relationships with children, colleagues and parents / carers. In agreement, Brockbank, McGill and Beech (2002) found that reflective practice provides better opportunities to do better and further their professional practice. This opportunity will allow the individual to complete their job to the best of their ability. Brandenburg, K. et al (2017) supports reflective practice as it helps professionals develop their expertise. Allowing professionals who work together to work in a collaborative space discussing and reflecting as a team can create a strong and well educated professional team. Additionally, this develops an individual's professional development. Jones and Shelton, (2011) present reflective practice through the idea of a butterfly. They state the metamorphosis stage of reflection is new thinking. It can potentially hurt as it often includes change however the butterfly can fly after not crawling. This represents the development of professionals in advancing their knowledge and skills. Jones and Shelton (2011) ideas on reflective practice ensures that the

reflect on what they do and why they do it. They believe that reflective practice is a requirement of working in early years. In order for the children to develop in the setting, the practitioners will need to continue developing to maintain up to date and ensure everyone is progressing. Similarly, Nutbrown (2013) states that every child deserves the highest quality of care and education therefore early years practitioners that use reflecting practice are more likely to provide a better education and care to the children in their setting. Additionally, early year practitioners are typically valued by the parents. It is vital that practitioners maintain this by providing the best care they can to the child. Being the best practitioner an individual can be will show respect towards the child and will make them feel valued. All of these points are corresponding to the fact that reflective practice is vital in early years and not only develops the practitioner but also benefits the children and the quality of care too.

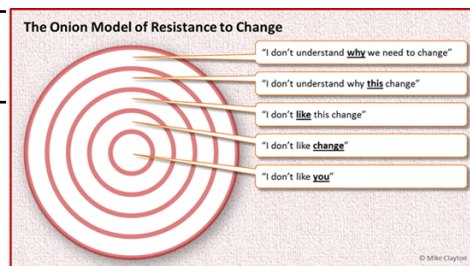
individual is meeting professional standards. As well as improving the work and teaching provided for the children, it will also benefit their learning and development. Professional development can even result in potential promotion. From these arguments, one can conclude that reflective practice supports and helps individuals develop as a professional and provide the best quality of care. As well as having a positive impact on the individual it also benefits the professional environment.

Reflective models

The first theory to discuss is Schon. Schon, (1987) described reflection as experiencing an event, making sense of the action response, critique and making appropriate change. He then developed his theory. Schon, (2001) then believed that reflection can be done in two different ways. First being reflection in action. This represents the automatic instinct an individual might have. They do not deliberately act how they respond. Instead they experience the situation and immediately decide how to approach it and act instantly. In comparison to the reflection on action which is when the individual will think about the situation and what will need to be done differently in the future. Secondly, Gibbs and Andrew (2001) published the Gibbs Reflective Learning Cycle. This consists of describing what happened, followed by the feelings and thoughts that came from it. Next the individual will evaluate and judge whether the experience was good or bad and analyse what can be made from the situation. Final steps are then to conclude what else could have been done then create an action plan if the situation arose again as to what could be done differently. This then will continue in a cycle. Using this cycle allows many different types of professionals, including early years practitioners to extend their practice and have a positive impact on them and their job role. The next theory is The Experiential Learning Cycle. This was developed by Kolb (2014). It begins with the concrete experience which is followed by the reflection observation. After this the next step is to abstract conceptualisation so to learn from the experience and to end the cycle the individual will activate the experimentation by trying out what they have learned. This cycle just continues to repeat around. Kolb (2014) states that this cycle is widely used and is adapted to different professionals. The consequences that result from this cycle create new experiences to continue the cycle on further. This simplistic cycle increases the compatibility of thinking and experience. Moreover, Korthagen and Vasales (2010, p. 529-552) created a model of reflection named the Onion Model. This is described as 6 different layers which illustrate action. They say using this model helps an individual make a frame and make sense of the findings. When the individual becomes in touch with their inner feelings the core begins to influence the outer levels. The onion model combines them all together and produces the best result. The individual can look back at the previous layers and see how far they have improved. Another theory is Driscoll's Model of Reflection. Driscoll (2007) has a model which has 3 stages starting with describing the event that has taken place, the purpose of the cycle. Then this is followed by explaining why the event has taken place, this is the analysis. Lastly, to finish, suggesting what happens next and how it will be changed in the future which is the proposed action following the event. This cycle is likely to take place when there is lack of preparation for an event that is about to occur. If new ideas are taken into consideration and carried out this will result in clinical supervision. Driscoll (2007) emphasises that this cycle should be written down briefly so it does not consume time, however it is more effective when written down than verbalised. It can be argued that as this cycle is so simple it can limit creative thinking however this cycle has been carried out very frequently in professional practice and has resulted in professional development. All of these cycles, models and theories provide a range of ways to carry out a reflection. They are all very similar to an extent and vary in simplicity so there is a model for everyone. If one follows one of these methods they will be starting their reflective journey and should see professional development. In conclusion, reflective practice is significant to professional development in the early years workforce.



Gibbs Reflective Cycle
(Mindtools, 2022)



The Onion Model
(MikeClayton, 2011)

References

Barnard, A. (2017) *Developing Professional Practice in Health and Social Care*. 1st ed. Oxon: Routledge.

Bassot, B. (2015) *The Reflective Practice Guide: An interdisciplinary approach to critical reflection*. 1st ed. London: Routledge.

Brandenburg, K. et al. (2017) *Reflective Theory and Practice in Teacher Education*. 4th ed. Singapore: Springer.

Bristol CBT. (No date) Available at:

<https://www.bristolcvt.co.uk/on-reflection-part-1-reflective-practice-in-cvt/> (Accessed: 24.10.2022)

Brock, A. (2015) *The Early Years Reflective Practice Handbook*. 1st ed. London: Routledge.

Brockbank, A., McGill, I. and Beech, N. (2002) *Reflective Learning in practice*. 1st ed. London: Routledge.

Brodie, K. and Savage, K. (2015) *Inclusion and Early Years Practice*. 1st ed. London: Routledge.

Budworth, T. and Hashemi, W. S. G. A. (2015) *Reflective Learning: An essential tool for self-development of health and safety practitioners*. 1st ed. Oxford: Routledge.

Canning, N. and Reed, M. (2010) *Reflective Practice in the Early years*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Claxton, G. (2003) *The Intuitive Practitioner: On the Value of Not Always Knowing What One Is Doing*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Covery, S. R. (2004) *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*. London: Simon and Schuster.

Dale, G. and Evans, M. (2018) *Successful Nonverbal Communications*. 5th ed. New York: Routledge.

Douglas, V. and Fourie, J. (2021) *Safeguarding Children, Young People and Families*. New York: SAGE Publications Inc.

Driscoll, J. (2007) *Practising Clinical Supervision: A Reflective Approach for Healthcare Professionals*. 2nd ed. Kirk: Bailliere Tindall Elsevier.

Elliot, B., Dunhill, A and Shaw, A. (2009) *Effective communication and engagement with children and young people, their families and carers*. London: SAGE Publications.

Fennell, M. L. and Leicht, K. (2001) *Professional Work: A Sociological Approach*. 1st ed. Malden: Blackwell Publishers.

Fenton-Glynn, C. (2019) *Children's Rights and Sustainable Development*. 1st ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Friedman, A. L. (2012) *Continuing Professional Development: Lifelong learning of millions*. 1st ed. Oxon: Routledge.

Gasper, M. (2009) *Multi-agency working in the Early Years: Challenges and Opportunities*. 1st ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Gasper, M. (2015) *A Critical Companion to Early Childhood*. SAGE Publications, Inc.

Gibbs, G. and Andrew, C. (2001) *Learning by Doing: A Guide to teaching and learning methods*. 2nd ed. Gloucestershire: Geography Discipline Network.

Jasper, M. (2003) *Beginning Reflective Practice*. 1st ed. Cheltenham: Nelson Thomas.

Jasper, M. (2013) *Beginning Reflective Practice*. 2nd ed. Andover: Cengage Learning.

Jones, M. and Shelton, M. (2011) *Developing Your Profolio: Enhancing your learning and showing your stuff. A guide for the early childhood student or professional*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.

Kolb, D.A. (2014) *Experimental Learning: Experience as the source of Learning and Development*. 2nd ed. London: Pearson Education.

Korthagen, F. A. J. and Vasalos, A. (2009) 'Going to the core: Deepening Reflection by Connecting the Person to the Profession.' in Lyons, N. (1st ed.) *Handbook of Reflection and Reflective Inquiry*. Boston: Springer.

Lindon, J. and Trodd, L. (2016) *Reflective Practice and Early Years Professionalism*. 3rd ed. London: Hodder Education.

MacLeod-Brudenell, I. et al. (2004) *Advanced Early Years Care and Education*. Oxford: Bath Press Ltd.

MikeClayton. (2011) Available at:
<https://mikeclayton.co.uk/2011/09/creating-the-onion-model-2/> (Accessed: 24.10.2022)

Mindtools. (2022) Available at:
<https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/reflective-cycle.htm>
(Accessed: 23.10.2022)

NSPCC (2021) 'History of Child protection in the UK'
<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-protection-system/history-of-child-protection-in-the-uk>

(Accessed: 27.10.2022)

Nutbrown, C. (2013) *Shaking the foundation of Quality? Why 'childcare' policy must not lead to poor quality early education and care*. Sheffield: University of Sheffield.

Orey, M. (2014) *Communication Skills Training*. Virginia: ATD Press.

Potter, C. and Hodgson, E. W. (2007) 'Why is reflection important for early childhood educators?', in Brock, A. (1st ed.) *The Early Years Reflective Practice Handbook*. London: Routledge.

Russell, T. (2006) 'Can reflective practice be taught?' *Reflective Practice: International and Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, 6(2), pp. 199-204. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623940500105833>. (Accessed: 23.10.2022)

Schon, D. (1987) *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a new design for teaching and learning in the professions*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Schon, D. (2001) 'Reflective conversations', in MacLeod-Brudenell, I. et al. (1st ed.) *Advanced Early Years Care and Education*. Oxford: Bath Press Ltd.

Schon, D. (2011) *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think In Action*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Sugerman, D.A. et al. (2000) *Reflective Learning: Theory and Practice*. 1st ed. Iowa: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company.

Thomas, A. and Lewis, A. (2016) *An Introduction to the Foundation Phase*. 1st ed. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

UNICEF (No date) 'For every child' <https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/> (Accessed: 27.10.2022)

Wilson, T. (2016) *Working with parents, carers and families in the Early Years: The Essential Guide*. 1st ed. Oxon: Routledge.