

What is reflection and reflective practice?

According to the University of Edinburgh (n.d) Reflection is a way to be able to explore and examine our own perspectives, our experiences, our attributes and, also ourselves. Reflection allows us to obtain an insight and helps us to find different ways on moving forward. In order to improve your practice, having the ability to reflect plays a key role. Lucas (1991) refers to reflection as a way to deepen our knowledge and understanding of our practice. Bolton (2009) believes that the practice of reflection is not a special technique nor a part of a curriculum, but more of a state of one's mind. According to The Open University (2013) reflection is when we deeply consider and consciously look deeply into our experiences, responses and feelings, in order to learn and progress further to get the best possible outcome. For example, The University of Cambridge (n.d) describes reflection as having the opportunity to step into a time machine and having the ability to change an activity that may not have gone as you had initially planned. Unfortunately, you are obviously unable to use time travel, however by devising a plan for the next time you do this same activity and adapting it, you are reflecting on your practice. Johns (2013) describes reflection as having the ability to be mindful about yourself within an experience or after it. He believes his understanding of reflection is ever changing and always developing in different ways. There are two different kinds of reflections according to Schön's(1991) theory. The first is reflection in action and the second is reflection on action. The University of Hull (2022) differentiates the both as: Reflection in action is reflecting during the event and reflecting on action means reflecting after the event has happened. There is no correct way to reflect, each practitioner is different therefor their styles of reflection will differ, what works for one may not work for the other.

The importance of being a reflecting practitioner in the early years setting.

Brock (2014) says that reflection is a tool to enable the practitioner to improve their practice, this is vital as an early years practitioner. Hallet (2013) says that as the policies and landscapes within the early years sector are forever changing due to reasons such as government-led policies and influences from abroad such as the Reggio Emilia approach, it is important to reflect so that we, as professionals, are able to keep up to date with these new changes. As a way of ensuring that the children in our care and their families receive the best quality of experiences then we must be able to reflect on our practice, in order to improve provision. Hallet (2013) believes It is important to not only reflect on things that have not gone well, but also the things that have gone well within your practice. By being a reflective practitioner our children and families will have their individual needs nurtured. As practitioners when we reflect on our practice we build on our skills, which in turn help us to develop our confidence and increase our motivation, Pacey (2016)

(Source: Nursing net-2022)

Reflection in action	Reflecting as something happens	What do I want/ need to learn?	What will I do to achieve this?	What resources or support will I need?	What will be the impact on my practice?
	Consider the situation Decide how to act Act immediately	How the EYPS has changed	Attend PACEY webinar	1. Time set aside to attend 2. Book course 3. Pay fee	My plans, policies and procedures will be updated in line with new requirements
Reflection on action	Reflecting after something happens	How to spot and address problems with speech and language development	1. Investigate research and techniques (e.g. books, online) 2. Meet with local speech and language therapist (SLT)	1. Support from local SLT 2. Order any books	I will be better able to support children with speech and language problems

(Source: PACEY-developing self-reflective practice-2016)

Self-reflective tools.

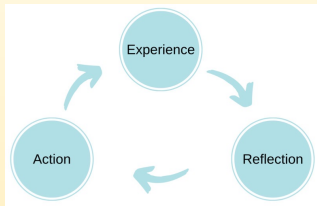
PACEY (2016) suggest that the use of a Professional Development Plan (PDP) can help sustain and monitor Continuous Professional Development. This table can help you progress through the reflective process after events such as lectures, seminars and different forms of professional training. By using this tool you are given the opportunity to measure your continuous professional development and see the impact this it is having on your practice.

How to become a reflective practitioner in the early years setting .

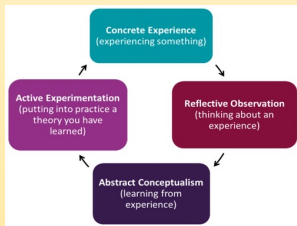
PACEY (2016) suggests that in order to become a reflective practitioner then you must look at your practice with a balanced view and understanding. Hallet (2016) shows you an acronym model in order to be able to reflect successfully, R-reason, E-evaluate, F-feedback, L-learn, E-explain, C-consider, T-think. By having the ability to carry out each of these steps, this will help you to become a reflective practitioner. Johns (2013) says that self dialogue with yourself can help make sense of a particular situation or activity that is being reflected. He suggests that by reflectively writing on your practice, this helps you become increasingly aware of any patterns forming. The Victoria state government (2019) believes that an effective reflective practitioner should be someone that is goal orientated and focused, You must be committed to reviewing and evaluating your work and practice, as reflection is a continuous. Also due to constant change and trial and error techniques, you must be patient and open-minded. It is also beneficial to receive regular supervision sessions from a senior management staff member to help you evaluate your practice, this helps to ensure that you are heading towards the correct goal. Hallet (2016) has suggested that there are reflective questions you are able to ask yourself so that reflective learning is taking place. The five questions to use as a questions guide to help empower and support professional practitioners reflection are; What? How? Who? When? Where? These questions tie into the R.E.P framework (Review, Evaluate and Plan.) Brock (2014) encourages practitioners to develop their reflective writing. She believes that though journaling and the use of self-assessment document it can support your reflective skills. PACEY (2016) suggests that in order to break the barriers of reflective practice, it is useful to keep a reflective diary. By doing this you are able to look back on your thoughts and feelings during the activity, you can then make a critically reflective decision on how best to move forward with your practice that will benefit the children in your care, giving them the best possible experiences in your settings.

Reflective models.

The University of Hull (2022) says that when you are an inexperienced reflective practitioner you may find it difficult to know how to begin. There are many different cycles you can use to provide support to your practice. As humans and practitioners we are all different, which means that we will all be naturally drawn to different models. The university of Cambridge (n.d) draws our attention to the fact that within each reflective model there are many similarities, however each do have their own take on the cycles. The biggest difference you will notice is there are a difference in the amount of steps in each model. For example The ERA framework has three steps, whilst Kolb's has 4. Each creator has also gone into different depths of information in each of their model.



(Source:
Reflecting
writing tips- n.d)



(Source: The University
of Hull-2022)

Kolb's reflection model.

The University of Hull (2022) believes Kolb's cycle of reflection practice is used as a way to structure your thinking. It is based on four phases and it requires you to complete each step so that it helps lead you to new experiences. Once you have worked through each step it then brings you back to the start where you then restart. It is a never ending cycle that can help improve your practice time and time again. Step one is your concrete experience, it begins with your descriptions of your experience and your thoughts during it. Next is where reflective observation begins. At this stage you will begin to reflect on this particular experience, here you are required to think about your experience. Here you focus on your feelings and how this is linked to earlier experiences and knowledge. After this is abstract conceptualism, in this stage you must reflect on the positives and the negatives of this experience. Here is where you learn from a certain experience. Now on to the final stage which is active experimentation, here is where you set realistic and achievable goals, and where any learning that has taken place through reflecting is put into practice. Cardiff Metropolitan University (n.d) describes stage four as being able to create a tailor made plan after reflecting on the things that went right during this experience and what went wrong, in order to make changes and improve practice.

The ERA cycle.

Jasper's (2013) Era cycle is said to be one of the simplest of reflective models as it is created from only three, easy to follow steps. Experience, Reflection and Action. According to The University of Cambridge (n.d) Firstly we begin with an experience, this could be a new experience or something we have experienced before. Once the experience has taken place next comes reflection. We begin to dissect this experience and deeply evaluate, and here is where we begin to decide on what steps to take next. This is where we then get to our last step, where we take action. When we have taken action we are then presented with a new experience, thus continuing the cycle enabling you to perfect your practice.

Pro's and Con's to Reflective models.

TUS-Technological University of the Shannon (2022) believe that as with everything we do in life, although there are many positives to using reflective models in your practices, there are also negatives. By using models you are able to assess your practice and follow a structured path during reflection, which in turn leads you to be sure when the process of reflecting is complete. The university of Cambridge (n.d) supports TUS's (2022) statement, believing that when following a structure this also allows you to have a confident starting point. However, when following these structured models you must follow each step in the correct order. The University of Sussex (2022) believe that you can improve your own academic skills by reflecting on your practice, which is always positive. Reflective practice is also a continuous process, which means you must be very committed to this form of reflection. The University of Edinburgh (2020) There are many different models and depths of reflections to choose from when becoming a reflective practitioner, it may require trial and error until you find a model that best suits your needs.

Conclusion.

Therefore in conclusion Schön (1991) believes a reflective practitioner is someone who has the ability to reflect on their practice in action and on action. Brock (2014) says that professional practitioners should be open minded and should be willing to change their practice time and time again, constantly learning and improving for the benefit of the children in their care, the families and also themselves. In order to be a successful reflective practitioner The University of Hull (2022) states that you should be confident to use reflective models such as Jasper's ERA cycle and Kolb's model in aid of perfecting their practice. Hallet (2013) suggests that a reflective practitioner will have the understanding that policies and practices are regularly updated in accordance to government guidance and also to the wants and needs of children, therefore you must be adaptable to last minute change within practice. By being a reflective practitioner you are developing your confidence as a practitioner, this in time will help create confident learners in your settings.

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