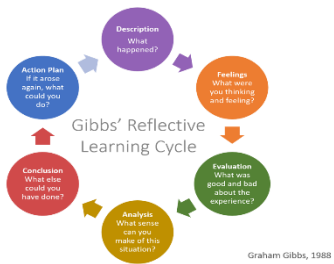


What is reflection & reflective practice? Reflection refers to going back over something in our minds. However, reflecting as an Early Years practitioner differs slightly from this. It means making our thinking clearer, broadening our understanding, and strengthening our learning to make better changes. (Cottrell, 2023, p.203-204) According to Little Scholars School of Early Learning, (2023), Reflective practice is engaging in the process of reviewing and understanding to reach a better outcome. Reflecting on our professional practice enables us to learn from our accomplishments, provide better care and experiences, and improve our methods.	Why is reflective practice important to EY practice? As Brock explains, Early Years professionals need to continuously progress in their professional expertise and personal values to meet the continuous challenges of change. Using reflective practice allows us to develop new skills as practitioners and improve how we practice. This approach enables practitioners to overcome challenges and difficulties and enhance experiences among co-workers, and those the practitioner is responsible for. (Page, 2013, p.21-22)
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The theory of reflective practice: Reflective practice originated from the work of Dewey and Schon. As explained by Iriss, in 1933 Dewey saw reflective practice as a key part of a cycle, a cycle that permits us to learn from past encounters. Dewey believed that reflective practice began when practitioners encountered difficult situations. He then went on to explain that practitioners, having experienced those difficulties could reflect and analyse what had happened, or what had gone wrong. This enables practitioners to find solutions that would alter the outcome in the future. Dewey (1933, P.107) goes on to explain the five stages of his theory: 1. Noticing a difficulty- When a difficult or unexpected situation arises, reflection can then occur. 2. Define the difficulty- Highlight what is causing the difficulty and make the problem clear. Assess both from different points of view and identify any meanings and/or assumptions behind the causes. 3. Develop possible explanations- Take into consideration the possible explanations of the difficulties that occurred to help understand the how and why the difficulties presented, and if there are any possible solutions to them. 4. Elaborate on the explanations- Take the time to establish whether any progress can be made to understand what is required as a solution, who it involves and what the benefits and risks may be. 5. Apply and experiment- Experiment with new approaches, behaviours and perceptions to expand on the possible explanations that originated from reflection. These developments create the basis for further reflection and continuous learning. According to Gulari, Dewey was one of the first to acknowledge reflective practice. Schon then later followed, with the difference being that Schons theory focuses majorly on action and learning from experiences. The University of Hull explains that Schon's theory considers reflection 'in' action, which is during an event or situation, and reflection 'on' action, which is to reflect afterwards. Schon (1983) goes on to explain his reflective practice theory in three stages: 1. Before action- This concept allows for professional expertise and judgment to operate on instinct. It's responding instinctively due to the ability to recognise the depth of training and knowledge that has been received. 2. In action- This method involves thinking 'on your feet' whilst fully engaged in a situation or activity. Immediate reflection allows the practitioner to gain a responsive approach in a timely manner and the ability to apply effective responses. 3. On action- Reflecting on a difficulty or situation is crucial in allowing for critical evaluation. Reflecting on action provides the opportunity for the experience to be thoroughly thought over. Sharing the outcomes of on action reflection can also enhance practice and contribute to much greater wisdom.
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Gibbs' Model:  Figure 1: Gibbs' Reflective Model (1988)	Driscoll's Model:  Figure 2: Driscoll's Reflective Model (1994)
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Analysis of models Channell argues that Gibbs' reflective cycle has many advantages and disadvantages. They go on to say that the cycle is user- friendly, the detailed step by step guide is easy to use and easy to follow. Channell also states that its versatile, that many different professionals and industries can adapt the cycle to their practice. However, Channell believes that to use the reflective cycle to full advantage, it requires specific skills in order to use criticism constructively, skills that not every professional acquire. Study Prism suggests that Driscoll's model is neat, with only three components. They state that the model is easily accessible and supports in the understanding of reflective practice. Claims made by the University of Edinburgh state that based only on three simple questions, Driscoll's model provides the most basic of framework, in order to reflect. The university also suggests that reflection will not be achieved completely as the three questions fail to encourage thinking in critical depth. Although similar, Driscoll's model is simplified. Its simplicity is what makes it more appealing in oppose to Gibbs' six question model. Both models have straightforward questions, making them easy to remember and both can be applied to a variety of situations. However, both models have come under criticism for being too basic and lacking in promoting of critical thinking and analysis, which is fundamental to reflective practise. (Regan, J. 2021)
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Conclusion: In conclusion, reflection and reflective practice is fundamental in becoming a successful professional practitioner. Using reflective practice enables practitioners to overcome th everyday challenges and difficulties amongst those in which, the practitioner is responsible for. Reflection encourages practitioners to develop new skills and understanding whilst keeping up the the demands of change, and allows us to provide better care and better experiences. Dewey was one of the first to acknowledge the cycle of reflection, explaining through different stages of his theory, such as, recognising difficulties, understanding them and finding solutions. Its understood that Schon then went on to build on Deweys theory, resulting in the three stages of his practice; Before- action, In- action and On- action, or in simpler terms; before, during and after. Furthermore, Gibbs and Driscoll also went on to develop reflective cycles, encouraging professionals to continuously reflect on their practice using an easy step-by-step guide. The framework to these reflective cycles are fundamental in order to reflect in a way that promotes greater learning opportunities and a greater wisdom within the practitioners setting, resulting in an overall greater professional practitioner
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