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Study Skills Portfolio

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in this research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI-generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts notes and other resources that may be asked to provide in evidence.

The Professional Practitioner

Due to success in college studying in health and social care and my 5 year experience as a teaching assistant I believe I have gained a strong surface-level knowledge. The combination of my academic studies and practical learning has enabled me to have a good understanding in what is needed to support children's development, learning and well-being in foundation settings.

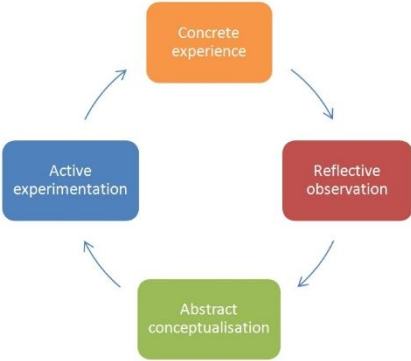
I am eager to move past just solely research and successfully completing accredited courses that will look at topics in more depth and allow me to feel confident when faced with any challenge. My overall goal is to be able to deliver the best possible support for children, with the best practical and physical I knowledge. I will set myself goals from short to long term to ensure I am always learning and improving

Objective / Gwrthrychol	Actions (How will I achieve this objective/ what needs to be done?)	Resources (What support and resources are needed to achieve this objective?)	Target Date for achieving objective	Success criteria (How will I know I have achieved this goal, how will I review this?)
	Camau gweithredu (Sut byddaf yn cyflawni'r amcan hwn/beth sydd angen ei wneud?)	Adnoddau (Pa gefnogaeth ac adnoddau sydd eu hangen i gyflawni'r amcan hwn?)	Dyddiad Targed ar gyfer cyflawni amcan	Meini prawf llwyddiant (Sut byddaf yn gwybod fy mod wedi cyflawni'r nod hwn, sut byddaf yn adolygu hyn?)
<i>Learn more about the neuroglial aspects of a child's development</i>	Broadening my knowledge on the topic ensuring a deeper grasp on the domain.	Taking time to watch many different webinars, ted talks, books and case studies.	01/11/25	I will review my knowledge by discussing to peers and observing how confidently and accurately I can relay information that I have learnt. I will also look to see if I am incorporating anything I have learnt into my work naturally, indicating I have successfully understood the information.

<i>Practice my skills in forest school</i>	Getting hands on experience and getting to see other practioners work around fforest schools.	A experience established fforest school setting. Workshops specialising in fforest school.	1/01/2026	I will keep a journal to track my progress. I will also seek feedback from staff in the setting as well as observing how confidently I can plan and lead outdoor play and education.
<i>To specialise in childrens well being in early years</i>	Attend a course that supports this e.g. ELSA to build my knowledge and allow me to be confident delivering this support.	Credited course, books and studies to support me throughout the course. A placement where I can practice my knowledge.	01/03/2026	With parental consent, I will work closely with a child in a school setting whom has been referred for ELSA. At the end of my course with the child I will evaluate and look to see if the child has benefitted from my support. Ideally, I would like to do this with a few case studies to ensure I get a fair response.

Reflection is where we deeply think about past experiences and situations to be able to gain understanding of them. Through reflective practice we are able to analyze what went well and what didn't, allowing us to see where we could improve for next time. Reflecting allows us to gain a critical understanding of our experience, knowledge and confidence through the reflection. With these gained acubutes it allows us to be more proactice over time. We begin to be more aware of our decisions, it slowly becomes apart of you and what you do.	Reflective practice is the core within an Early years practise. It is greatly important and shows when good reflective practice is being regularly used within an early years setting. Ofsted and CSSIW now highlight the importance of reflective practice in their frameworks, making it essential for early years settings (Ofsted, 2015). It ensures the quality of care and education delivered to the children is continuously improving. Upon using regular reflection Practitioners will gain confidence through their reflective practice, resulting in better quality of teaching, learning and support. Reflection also encourages informed decision making; instead of relying on habit or assumption reflective practice allows practitioners to use observations and plan for next times. Importantly reflective practice builds teamwork and strong relationships. When reflection is used within a team it enables team learning. Where a team can listen, give advice, feedback and collaborate together leading to better relationships and communication allowing a positive and safe environment for the children. Appleyard (2025) emphasises the importance of reflection within childcare settings. Highlighting that reflection supports higher standards of care for children as practitioners get to know each child's needs better through reflection.
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Reflective practice is both a theory and method used in many fields, including Early years practises. The concept of reflective practice has been largely shaped by two theorists; Dewey (1933) and Schon (1983). Dewey encourages that reflection is the core to learn from experience. Schon (1933) highlighted the idea of reflection in action; where you reflect in the moment and reflection on action; where you reflect after the situation. Both key thinkers encouraged continuous professional improvement through reflection. Many models build on their work to form structure and cycles including the Gibbs' model and Kolbs' model.	

Gibbs' model  <pre> graph TD Description --> Feelings Feelings --> Evaluation Evaluation --> Analysis Analysis --> Conclusion Conclusion --> ActionPlan[Action Plan] ActionPlan --> Description </pre>	Kolb's model  <pre> graph TD Concrete[Concrete experience] --> Reflective[Reflective observation] Reflective --> Abstract[Abstract conceptualisation] Abstract --> Active[Active experimentation] Active --> Concrete </pre>
<u>The Gibbs' model</u> The Gibbs model leads you through a six stage cycle exploring an experience. Gibbs (1998) believed you reflect best when you think deeply about what you have done. The model dives deeply into the situation taking in all aspects, including your emotions, feelings and opinions. <u>The Kolbs' model</u> The Kolb's' model is made up of four stages; experience, reflection, thinking and action. The Kolb's' model is a short and quick model, it focuses on putting the reflection into practice as part of the cycle. Kolb (1984) suggests that people learn	

best through experience. hence why the model promotes practitioners to act on their reflection as the last step, encouraging continuous professional development.

The Gibbs' model is very logical making the model easy to follow even for beginners whom are new to reflecting. Though sometimes this is seen as a positive attribute this can also be seen as a fault. Many may find that the model feels rigid and doesn't flow naturally. In comparison the Kolb's model is shorter and quicker to use with only four steps to the model. Schon (1983) argues that in real life situations, professional practitioners engage in reflection in action. The Kolbs' model encourages this as it promotes hands on learning and reflection through action. In contrast a positive aspect to the Gibbs model that may feel missed from the Kolb's' model is that it encourages to reflect in depth. His six step model allows us to explore all emotions and to highlight what went well too not just what needs improving. Ghaye & Ghaye, (1988) suggests celebrating successes within reflection is just as important.

In conclusion it is evident that reflective practice is critical in professional practice, including early years practises. It is a vital tool to allow practitioners to learn and grow from their experiences which in hand will provide a better quality learning environment meeting everyone's needs. Dewey (1933) encapsulates this, he believed that students should be taught how to think, not just what to think. This really captures the essence of reflection, reflection allows one to take a step back and look at their own work, the good and the bad. Instead of acting on habit or learnt behaviours which is greatly seen across many Early year's practises. Both Kolbs' and Gibbs' models both offer this.

Different aspects of professional practise and why these are important in meeting the individual and inclusive needs of children

Being a professional is down to how you carry out a role, meeting the standards, activists and behaviours expected of you in your profession. When these different attributes are combined and mastered it forms a professional person who not only knows a role but also does it ethically with care and experience. Values within a professional practice are vital as they ensure work is carried out to high standards, it builds trust, fairness and grows a strong reputation. Freire (1970) supports this by claiming good teaching must teach with underlying values. A few crucial values a professional person should have is integrity, fairness and respect. These values all come hand and hand. These values show respect, honesty and clarity within the professional. These values allow the service user to feel heard, safe and given a peace of mind. This is a crucial factor to why values are so important within a professional practice. When the service user feels secure they build better bonds and relationships with the professional allowing the professional to be able to support the individual with appropriate support personalised to them. Another key value for a professional to carry is responsibility and accountability. When one is accountable they take responsibility in their actions. This is such an important value to have as a professional in a practice. Bennis (2010) encourages that professionals must show accountability to keep trust and model ethical behaviour. Good communication and strong relationships are the foundation to a successful practice and ensures the needs of the children are met. When the professional has good communication and strong bonds with the children, the children are likely to feel understood, supported and will tend to explore more as they feel safe. This is crucial as every child is different and require different needs. Bowlby (2014) supports this by emphasising how important a child's bond between their care giver is essential for emotional and social development. As a professional it is essential to constantly ensure that one has a in depth knowledge, understanding and awareness to the profession. Continuous knowledge on policies, legislations etc ensures that the professional can keep the children safe. The safeguarding act is a great example of this. A professional with awareness of the act ensures professionals are vigilant and potential risks are not missed maintaining the children's safety. Another aspect of professional practice is multi agency. Multiagency is when a practice works with other professional services. This is important within a professional practice as it means the needs of a child are paired down to ones who really need to be involved and can help, ensuring clear, important communication from different professional services where there's a chance to share knowledge and understanding of the child. An affective multiagency that is regularly used within Early years practises is early identification and intervention. This is where different agencies relay information of a child to pick up certain concerns including speech delay, neglect and additional learning needs. Bringing in different agencies allows the child to get the correct help and the best possible support early on. The children's act (2004) supports multi agency working by enforcing that all services work together and in partnership ensuring every child matters. Observation and planning cycle is another central aspect of professional practice. By regular observation and planning cycles it allows a service user e.g. a teacher to track the progress, needs and abilities of children and ensures they plan appropriately to be able to give the best support tailored to the child. It also gives the professional a chance to reflect on their own work, looking at what worked what didn't, continuously improving their work to deliver the best support for the children. Montessori (2021) encourages this claiming by observing the child the teacher can guide the child supporting them in their needs with the suitable materials

and tools. A final aspect to professional practice is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This is a legally binding agreement signed by 196 countries which highlights the fundamental rights of every child regardless of their ability, religion or race. This agreement is a foremost requirement for a professional practice. The UNCRC covers a wide range of rights ensuring no child is not thought about. UNICEF states no right is more important than another. The UNCRC disregards any discrimination in a professional practice ensuring every child's right is considered and respected. In conclusion, it is evident that professional practice is essential for meeting the individual needs of children. Erikson (1950) emphasises just how important a good role model is to a child's early years claiming their development depends on this. There are many different aspects that contribute to a good professional, many different but all equally just as important as one another. From values, regulations or multiagency all these aspects combine together to ensure children feel safe, heard and listened to personalised to their own needs. With that children are given the best possible chance for development which is every professional's main goal.

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