

Module Code: ECEY4009/C

Student Number: 2314285

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Objective	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?)
<i>Expand my knowledge on working with children with additional learning needs – with a focus on Down's syndrome.</i>	Training Courses Modules at university Read around the subject	Early communication skills for children with down syndrome: a guide for parents and professionals	Within the next year	Once I am able to communicate with children with additional learning needs easily
<i>Develop skills working with pre-school children and toddlers.</i>	Get experience through work. Read books	Equal chances: eliminating discrimination and ensuring equality in pre-school settings	Over the next 6 months	Once I have an expanded knowledge of working with pre-school children and toddlers due to experience
<i>Expand my knowledge of the Welsh language.</i>	Attend a Welsh Language course for beginners. Duo Lingo	Email Dr Lowri Lloyd, Director of Welsh Services Centre; RhagorlAITH lowri.lloyd@pcydd.ac.uk for more information about the courses Helpful link: www.canolfanpeniarth.org	Over the next 2 years	Once I have a basic knowledge and understanding of the Welsh language

My first objective is to expand my knowledge on working with children with additional learning needs- with a focus on Down syndrome. I have chosen this for my personal development plan as I will be working with an early years child with down syndrome next year and I would like to expand my knowledge to provide the best care possible. One of the ways I will achieve this is by taking a training course on additional learning needs. I am hoping to achieve a wider knowledge on the subject within the next year to help me communicate with children with additional learning needs to the best of my ability. I will know I have achieved my goal once I am able to do this. My next objective is to develop skills working with pre-school children and toddlers. I have chosen this skill for my development plan as I have recently started working in a nursery and I would really like to expand my knowledge to give the children the correct care. The way I will do this is by continuing to work and use my experience to expand my knowledge. I will also be reading different books to pick up a wider variety of skills. I am hoping to achieve this within the next 6 months as I will be continuing to work during that time. I will know I have achieved my goal when I have an expanded knowledge working with pre-school children and toddlers. My final objective is to expand my knowledge of the Welsh language. I have chosen this objective as I have a very limited knowledge of Welsh and would like to expand it. To achieve this goal, I will attend a Welsh language course for beginners, and I will also spend some time learning on duo lingo as I think this will help me to make a start. The target time frame I have set to expand my Welsh language skills is over the next 2 years. I will have achieved my goal when I have a basic understanding of Welsh phrases and key words.

Briefing paper

What is reflection and reflective practice?

It is suggested that the difference between thinking and reflective thinking is that you are required to make a conscious effort to think about everything. Reflective practise also develops a deeper insight into your practice (Skills you need,2023). An important role in early years is reflection and reflective practice. These are core values of a professional practitioner as stated by Brock, (2015). We can recognise characteristics in reflective learners by working with children, this enables us to nurture our own frame of mind to experience and be curious (Hanson & Appleby, 2015). Reflective practise includes a demanding element as Wilson (2016) points out, this includes thinking further than what has happened and asking questions such as why it happened and what has been learned. Within the education sector reflective thinking is commonplace and many of the papers and books discuss reflective practice within education settings with an emphasis on how pupils learn according to Thompson & Pascal (2012). To be a good practitioner we need to be able to use reflective practice and have a fair and balanced view of our practice. We should be able to recognise what needs to be improved on to give the children a consistently improving experience in the early years setting as well as realising our own strengths and the things we do well. This is supported online (Professional Association for Children and Early Years, 2016).

Why is reflective practice important to Early Years practice?

Reflective practice has multiple benefits and is an important skill to self-improve and developing ourselves. This is important to early years practice because when we reflect, we learn and gain insight which helps us to become better practitioners. This can be supported by Gunning (2022). Reflective thinking can give practitioners the confidence to make a positive difference to the children involved by changing the way they practice for the better. One of the main purposes of reflective practice is to provide quality learning and encourage appropriate and enjoyable experiences in the early years setting as pointed out by Hanson & Appleby (2015). Similarly, Hallet (2013) states that providing better quality experiences for children and their families is the purpose of reflective thinking (i.e., it is the end goal). A key factor to reflective thinking is a willingness to engage fully while reflecting. This could be the central growth in the practitioners social-emotional competencies as believed by Virmani et al. (2020) As reflective thinking has such a big impact on children and improving their time at school or other settings, it should be a real part of life and not just an abstract exercise. Reflective practise should also be continuous and ongoing throughout our time as a practitioner as stated by Brock (2015).

The Theory of Reflective Practice:

The idea of reflective practice started off from the work of Dewey and Schon. They both present slightly different views. Dewey stated that reflective practise is the persistent and consideration of any belief. This means a practitioner would consider the reason *why* things are as they are and *how* they could be improved (The Open University, 2023). Schon, however, regards reflection as having two aspects, these are reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action is about quick thinking and assessing a situation as it is happening. However, reflection-on-action occurs outside the classroom and is used to reflect on the whole experience to consider what went well and what could have gone better. (The Open University, 2023).

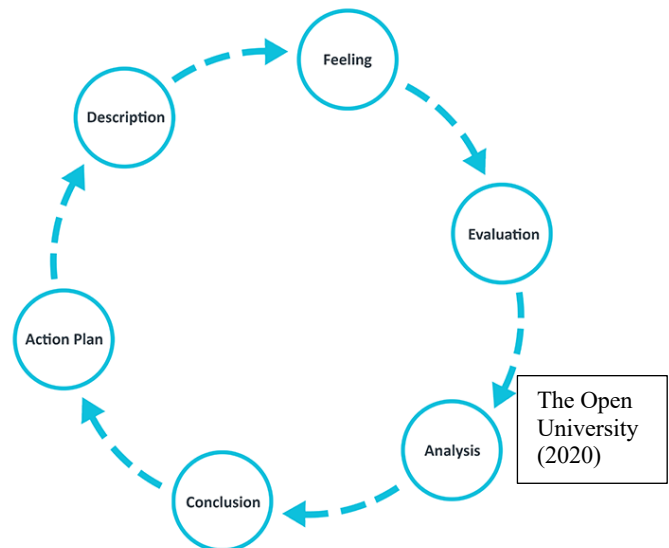
Analysis of models – Compare and contrast.

This section of the briefing will consider two reflective models, the thinking behind them and the differences between them. The two models being considered are:

- Gibbs Reflective Cycle
- Kolb's Cycle of Reflective Practice.

Gibbs Reflective Cycle

Graham Gibbs is an American Psychologist and Sociologist. He has made a large contribution in the field of learning (Wallbridge, 2022). Gibbs reflective cycle has 6 stages and was designed as a continuous circle. The key thing to know about Gibbs is the acknowledgement about the importance of feelings in reflective practice which can be seen in the 6 stages of his reflective cycle (this can be found online at University of Cumbria, 2020). The reflective circle is seen as a way to learn from experiences. It can be used to make sense of certain situations and can help people learn from their mistakes as Mind Tools Content Team (2023) state. Gibbs takes into account that people's personal feelings towards a situation can influence how it is handled and how we then reflect on the events. Gibbs can be used to acknowledge where mistakes have been made and help identify the skills needed to grow as a practitioner. Gibbs reflective cycle can be used to focus on own improvements and receive feedback from other people too, as pointed out by Wallbridge (2022). However, some academics argue that this theory is not very relevant to today's practitioners as it does not refer to critical thinking or analysis, this can be supported online (Open University, 2011).



Kolb's Cycle of reflective practise

David Kolb introduced one of the most influential models, the Experiential Learning Theory, in 1984. A great way for students to learn is experimental learning as they can apply their own knowledge in real life situation as stated by Main (2022). Kolbs reflective cycle consists of four stages. These are Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization and Active Experimentation (Spendelow, 2021). There are a lot of differences between these two models.

Analysis of Differences

To conclude, Gibb's model is learning through repetition whereas Kolb's model is learning through experience as Williams (2017) points out. Gibb's model includes emotional and personal aspects of reflection learning however, Kolb's model does not. Kolb's model involves active experimentation of new knowledge whereas Gibbs model is more structured.

Essay

In this essay I will be recognising and analysing the significance of different aspects of professional practice and why these are important in meeting the individual and inclusive needs of children. Professional practice in the early years setting is about putting the children first. A professional working with children should respect them as individuals and value their opinions. We should also promote their interests as practitioners and value being cooperative and working as a team as pointed out by Dyer (2016). There are many ways that we could define a professional however there are some key points that every professional practitioner should incorporate. These are being reliable, honest, Flexible and respectful (ACCA Global, no date). The children need to feel they can rely on us, and they deserve the same respect as anyone else. Finally, a professional practitioner should be passionate, committed, enthusiastic, interested and enjoy their work. Everyone who works in the early years setting should have these qualities as the children will be affected for the worse, as will the people who work with us, if we don't possess these values and qualities (Brock, no date).

In this paragraph I will be discussing the values that are important for a professional practitioner and why they are important to professional practice. All professional practitioners share the same values whether they work in an early year setting or in a completely different place, the key values stay the same. One of the first values we need is punctuality. If we are often late this will feed into the children's learning or play time when they need consistency. Another important value is Discretion and confidentiality, this is especially important in the early years setting as, often there will be problems with the children or other situations which need to be kept discreet for the safety and wellbeing of the child. Continuing professional development is an important value to have as a practitioner as we should always be aware of what we need to improve on, as well as what is going well in the practice (University of Bradford, 2023). Our goal as a professional should be to meet all of the children's goals and ensure they are observed, assessed, planned for and supported. We need to have a positive relationship with the children and the parents to make sure they are both fully supported (Early Years Careers, 2015).

Communication and relationships are important to professional practice and meeting the needs of the children for multiple reasons which I will now discuss. Communication is a key part for children's learning and overall development as it depends massively on being able to understand what is being said and communicated to them. All aspects of the school curriculum involve forms of language or communication, as research has discovered the role of oral language supports children's literacy development according to The Education Hub (2019). Good relationships with the children and their parents mean that we are able to work together to solve issues as we will have gained trust with both the child and their family. To succeed with making these relationships we should be approachable, friendly and professional as WJEC (2019) claims. Gray (2023) suggests that building a trusting relationship with the children will take time and will likely require self-reflection from the practitioner's part. Weak listening skills and lack of respect can create barriers in building relationships with both the child and parents as WJEC (2019) points out.

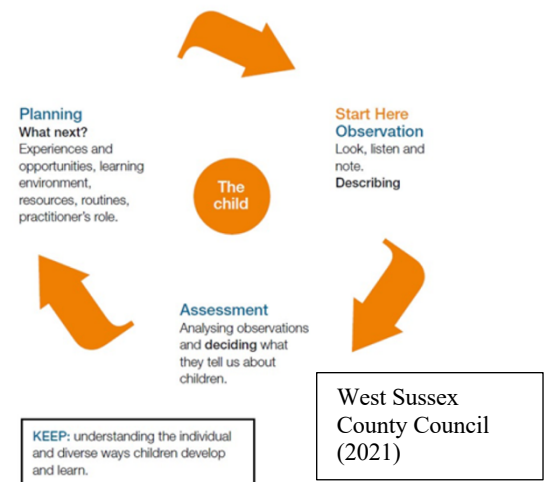
During this paragraph I will be discussing why having an in-depth knowledge and understanding is important to professional practise, including aspects of safeguarding. As a professional practitioner, having an in-depth knowledge will benefit the children we are working with as our knowledge will extend their experiences in the setting and in their everyday lives (Early Years matter 2023). It is very important to have a vast knowledge on safeguarding when you are working with children, no matter what the setting is. This will ensure that children are kept safe as some of the most vulnerable people in the community are the youngest as pointed out by Birch (2022).

Partnership and multiagency working are important to professional practice for many reasons, some of which I will discuss now. The Victoria Climbié Inquiry was one of the factors which led to the reforms in the children's act 2004. This was because of a need for reforms in the way that children and families were provided for through the agencies. There are multiple different reasons why multiagency working is important in professional practise. Two of the main reasons are Communication between multi agencies and specialisation. Communication is important as all agencies will be aware of what is happening in the child's life meaning they will recognise any further problems. Secondly, specialisation is key to ensure the families get expert help (Department for Education, 2018).

In this section of my essay, I will be talking about how observation and planning cycle inform professional practice and ensure practitioners are meeting the needs of children. According to Brodie (2013, p.17) there are a few things to consider while observing the children. Firstly, who will you be sharing your

observation with and what will the process be to successfully share this observation? Good observation making is a skill which needs to be practised and learnt before you can apply it into your work as a practitioner accurately. The diagram next to this text shows the observation, assessment and planning cycle which can help contribute to our knowledge about children (West Sussex County Council 2021). There are three types of planning, the first type is long term planning. This

involves covering all the areas of learning and development, as well as taking some time to think about the best way to balance both indoor and outdoor activities while still making time for quiet time, reading and reflection throughout the day as stated by West Sussex County Council (2021). The second type of planning is medium term planning. This is linked to your personal preference and what works for you in the setting (Davies 2023). The third planning technique is short term planning. This involves setting out the equipment and resources that are used on a day-to-day basis which benefit the children as stated by West Sussex County Council (2021).



In this paragraph I was be discussing how the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) inform professional practise and why it is important. The UNCRC have four principles which support the right of the child, these are: (United Nations Children's Fund, 2019)

- Non-Discrimination
- Best interests of the child
- The right to survival and development
- The views of a child

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These rights are based on the fact, children are equal to us and deserve basic human rights as stated by United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef, 2019). Children's best interest must always be put above everything else when making a decision that will affect them or their well-being as explained in Article 3. This states that, children must be the top priority when making any decision that will affect them (Unicef, no date). The UNCRC inform professional practice with many of their articles. For example, a practitioner will always respect the views of a child and listen to what they are saying as is stated in article 12. (Unicef, no date).

To summarise, there are many different aspects of professional practice that are very important in meeting the individual and inclusive needs of children. Professional practise is about always putting the children's needs first and being passionate and reliable. It is also a key value to be respectful towards everyone in the workplace such as children, colleagues and parents. Some of the values that are important for a Practitioner are punctuality, discretion and confidentiality. Communication and relationships are important to professional practice because communication is a key part to children's learning and safeguarding. It is important to have a good relationship with the children, so they feel comfortable confiding in you if they are having any problems. It is also important to have a good relationship with the parents so they trust you to do the best you can for their child. It is key to have a good knowledge of professional practice, including safeguarding. It is our job as the practitioner to look out for the child's wellbeing and inform other agencies where appropriate to ensure all professionals have the whole picture of the child's circumstances. The principles of the UNCRC inform practise as the children's best interests must be put above everything else. Our job as practitioners is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child through correct documentation and relevant communication.

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