

Reflective Theory Portfolio By Lucie Williams

I can confirm I have not used AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment.

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Developmental goals	Resources	The actions I need to take	Target Date	Achievements
Improve my knowledge on play within early years	I will need to find a course on play and to have feedback on what I am doing.	Sign up to play therapy courses	By September 2025	Gain more knowledge and strategies on play.
Learns more on speech and language techniques for children	To find a course appropriate for early years speech.	I will sign up to Elklan courses for early years.	By September 2024	Understanding of different ways of speech and language processes and strategies to support difficulties.
Complete my early education degree	Attend classes and complete reading from the reading lists.	Attend lectures, continue to work on my assignments and focus on reading lists to further my knowledge.	By July 2026	Have a degree in early years education.
Complete my PGCE	Have completed my undergrad degree.	Complete Early education degree and then apply for PGCE course.	By July 2028	Obtaining a teaching degree.
Improve my time management	Time, reading lists, assignment guidance and deadlines.	Set myself realistic goals and deadlines that I can achieve, starting tasks earlier and prioritise what is the most needed timeswise and nearest deadline.	By December 2024	I hope to achieve to be more prepared and use my time more wisely.

I am currently in the process of completing my early years education and care degree which I am planning on completing throughout the next two years by continuing to do my research and staying on top of my reading with hopes of getting a first at the end of the 2 years. I will then proceed with applying for my PGCE degree to professionally progress to become an early years or primary teacher. I would also like to improve my knowledge on speech and language which I am currently attending Elklan training for a better understanding of speech and language techniques and ways of learning within early years. I hope to complete the Elklan training by the end of the year which will be the end of the course.

Another area I would like to learn more about would be Play and play therapy. I would like to book onto a play therapy course for further ideas, and to improve my practise with children. From the course I hope to understand how play helps develop children's understanding socially and academically and how it shapes a child's life.

Lastly, I wish to improve my time management skills as promptly as possible to prevent any anxiety with starting my assignments by getting ahead. I will need to be breaking up my tasks into smaller chunks in order to not feel overwhelmed, and to plan out my assignments better for structure but also so that I can learn what to prioritise in an order of importance and time consuming tasks, to make my way

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through the assignment at a comfortable pace that suits me and fits in with a healthy academic lifestyle for success.

What is reflection and reflective practice?

According to Brock (2014), reflection and reflective practice is a set of values that may be educational values or personal values that professionals will follow and therefore promote in their practice. To be a good practitioner, it is thought Brock that reflection should be part of a person's daily life to improve oneself, as the more reflection that takes place leaves more opportunity for improvement and should result in learning from past reflections or experiences just by listening to ourselves. Reed (2015) states that reflection will help to support awareness within practice to help improve the quality of what practitioners are providing for children and their peers. They can within practice be able to pick up on what has been a positive or negative outcome to come out of their practice because they will be reflecting on what they thought went well or what next time will be changed to improve the quality of practice for themselves and the children. Reed (2015) also mentions reflective practice is an overview of various theories that will help determine and conclude an overall understanding of the research found to develop an individual theory for practitioner's own practice, so that practitioners can learn and expand the learning to evolve better understanding.

Why is reflective practice important in early years?

According to Paige-Smith (2011), reflective practice is a vital part of early years because the way practitioners choose to reflect directly impacts the children. Smith states that when children are simply observing adults, they are learning how to act socially to reenact with their peers, watching adults interact will shape the way that children socialize with their peers but also how they will be perceived. Bleach (2014) states that reflective practice is important in early years because for Practitioners to develop a professional work ethic they must have the ability to reflect upon their practice but also compare to others to explore all options to better and expand their practice for the next opportunity to achieve more positive outcomes, and according to Appleby and Andrews (2012) the practitioner personally engages by reflective thinking, learning and what action they will take for their next steps.

The Theory of Reflective Practice:

One theory of reflective practice is by John Dewey. According to Holdo (2022), he states that Dewey describes critical thinking as getting a more in-depth understanding of the factors that contribute the acts and decisions that individuals make in their learning process from a deeper understanding and gain more understanding of individual growth. Rodgers (2002) states that Dewey understands reflection to be a way in which a decision is made by the individual from their last experience, to improve their future encounters by learning from their past experiences, thus making each new encounter a more enriched version of the last.

Another theory of reflective practice is by Donald Schon. Schon (1992) reflection in action and reflection on action. UCD Teaching and Learning (no date) discusses reflection in action is reflection as a practitioner is in their practice they can make informed decisions based of their past experiences to improve the quality of what they teach in the present and reflection on action is when the practise has ended, the practitioner will take some time to go over and reflect upon what they would change or improve for next time.

Analysis of Theories of Reflective Practice:

Another theory of reflection is Kolb's theory. Kolb has a four-step model that works on reflection and understanding from having an experience within teaching and then next time choosing to change your practise to test the outcome to see if it has helped or negatively impacted learners. However, according to Kleinheksel (2023) a negative to this theory is that practitioners may not have time to dedicate to reflect every time they teach or after their practise. The article by Kleinheksel (2023) goes on to say that reflective practise can improve the learning of individuals by them being alerted to the weaknesses in their study so that those areas can be worked on for success. Also, staff who were trained and developed their understanding of reflection found that it positively impacted their teaching experience and the quality of what they were teaching and ow it will be beneficial to incorporate into more of their teaching practise.

Similarly, Gibb's theory is developed from Kolb's four step theory of practice. University of Hull (2024) states that Gibb's theory is also a structured theory. His theory helps to structure when writing an essay. This consists of six reflective steps. Description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and then an action plan to improve for next time. According to Potter (2015) when presented with a case study he assessed the findings and found that the answers the participants gave showed more detail within their thoughts and feelings leaving the facilitator with an enriched understanding of what he could better for the next time. From this approach it was found that the steps helped to understand the individual's next step, what they will get out of it and why they want to achieve their set goal. On the other hand, Open university (2014) suggest that Gibb's theory may not help with reflection at all as it doesn't include the use of critical thinking. As this theory may not break down other reasonings that may have arisen during the process, suggesting that the learning process doesn't show that there will be a definite change in practice from Gibb's theory.



Graham Gibbs 1988

In conclusion, there are many theories for reflective practise that can support individuals with reflection in action and on action, many of the approaches have strengths and weaknesses within their areas and is up to the individuals which may support their goals and needs best.



Kolb's Learning Cycle

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To recognise and analyse the significance of Professional Practice and why it is important to meet the individual needs of children.

Professional practice and professionals are a vital part of early years education. According to Gasper (2015), a professional is a difficult subject to put down to one definition as a professional is often considered someone of higher education and has the knowledge to fit their profession to execute the job well. However, Gasper states that in the early years, a professional can be seen as someone who has strong values and qualities within practice without having to have the qualifications to back them. Canadian Medical Association (2012) agrees that defining professionalism is not clear as due to changes over time opinions change.

Values

The values that practitioners show children, and their peers are a vital part of early years education. Powell (2010) states that the values and skills that we present to the children, as professional practitioners, in our care are so important to help them develop their own understanding of values and how they want to act out their values and morals. The article states that to be an early year's practitioner you will have certain qualities that coincide with working with children and young people. To train in up-to-date qualification, engage and upkeep levels of planning so that it is all up to date resources, participate in reflective practise in groups and individually, to show a level of care and want to work with children and to work alongside other professionals and parents to support the needs of the child during a difficult transition between both settings.

Communication

Social Care Wales (2017) states Communication is a huge part of early years practice because staffing is so important to have a good communication line between one another so that everyone is on that same page but also so that staff

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continues to stay motivated to provide with the best knowledge and attitudes being modelled to other members of staff but also the children. According to Wjec (2023), communication also involves creating relationships with colleagues, parents or guardians.

Communicating and building relationships with peers needs to involve listening, show understanding and responding to individuals. Communicating in different ways such as non-verbal cues like eye contact and simple facial expressions or gestures. For others this will show that they feel heard and listened to but then to also appropriately respond to what has been said will show that you have engaged and taken in the information, this between colleges and parents is vital so that there is an understanding of the relationship between everyone.

Regarding the children, communication is a learning experience that they learn from observation. Children develop communication skills by watching their trusted adults and basing their interaction off those, such as waiting their turn to talk, being honest and being confident in their language but also considerate of those around them.

Safeguarding

Understanding your role as an early year's practitioner is to be up to date with legislation and guidance to protect and work with the children in our care.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006) states that anyone attempting to work in any profession with children and vulnerable adults will have to go through checks to protect the safety of the individuals. Phair (2013) states the vetting and barring scheme was set up by the government to check on individuals aiming to work within childcare setting that they have no reasons to prevent them from working with children or the vulnerable. Without going through this process individuals will not be allowed to work in care setting for the safety and well-being of children and vulnerable adults.

According to The Children Act (1989) Professionals have a legal framework to follow and understand when reporting laws and through the years the laws and legislation

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will change, and it is up to professionals to follow and continuously update themselves so that they are always informed of the legislation to protect children.

Pippen and Brennan (2020), states that keeping children safe in education regarding safeguarding and child protection by trying to limit or prevent the use of young people going online. Even though being able to access online can be beneficial to young people due to finding information, communicating and entertainment, all aspects that can positively affect their lives there are also the downsides to online access. Children using technology for online purposes can become harmful or unsuitable content. This is why practitioners are responsible for making sure what can be accessed online is suitable and useful for the individuals but also what safe internet use is.

Multi-agency

According to Walker (2018), multi-agency work is vital element to what children can access to help them gain the best out of education and care. Multi-agency work are different services, like social services or educational services, that are provided to help with a common purpose. The Children's Act 1989 coincides with multi-agency as this is a requirement on agencies to intervene, when necessary, as the local authority has an obligation to the children to safeguard them and their welfare. The Multi-Agency Working (2006) states in their video that the agencies are there to help better the children's lives early on so that they can set them up for their prospects to be in a more encouraging and positive light.

Observation and Planning

According to Barber and Paul-Smith (2010), observation should be explored rather than it feels like an obligation as it gives the chance to understand and develop the child's wonder and what they can make out from play just by observing them. Planning is also another task that can be seen as a chore however if the planning can be led by the children and their play it can be a lot simpler and an enjoyable experience for them.

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To observe children is a fundamental part of practice as this can be seen as a keyway of understanding and getting to know the children in your care. To better understand their interests and what drives their play and learning, this will then impact planning to be more centred around the child.

The Welsh Government (2022) have a new approach which is a curriculum for funded non maintained nursery settings focuses on a child centred approach. This approach also suggests observation is the key to knowledge on children's learning and interests and suggests assessment, but not the average assessment where you have a check list, but the assessment should be able to tell practitioners what the child can do. The assessments should be a continuous task to show practitioners, parents or guardians the progress that the child is making.

The Principles of UNCRC

Unicef (2016) explain that UNCRC are an organisation that support the rights of children and making sure they get their basic human rights met, such as the right to food and shelter but also a right to an education, play and freedom of thought, religion, culture or language. This consists of 54 articles, articles 1-43 all stating the basic human rights based on children.

The articles inform practitioners by making sure that the setting the children are in are providing them with as many of the rights as possible. Kanyal (2014) states that in education UNCRC is put into three areas, the three P's participation, the right to Provision and Protection. This challenges educators to change the way that they think about themselves and to improve and adapt with how the laws and legislations may change over the years. This helps the children's right to be implemented into schools' policies but also for educators to be up to date and trained in their policies. Article 12 should be in everyday use as it is important that children give their say and feelings on what their education is providing them.

In conclusion, children's rights should be known and implemented across their education to support their rights and needs, whether that be through multi-agency support or through teaching and the adults that are role models to children. It is

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important for practitioners to send the right message across to students by showing the right values shown through good communication also modelled by the adults and practitioners around them.

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