

1.) The Effective Practitioner

When one works with children, they must have the competence to understand the whole picture of what their role will consist of. Therefore, practitioners must be effective and active in their role. Brodie (2015) supports this statement as she believed that an effective practitioner can identify what is unique about new scenario's and what possible circumstances surround them as they have the knowledge to develop a way to approach the scenario appropriately. In 2014, the Welsh Government decided to consider changes that would bring improvements in Initial Teacher Education and Training (ITET). John Furlong was delegated as the adviser in Wales and he decided that Wales needs a future made up of teachers who for example:

- Have high expectations of and a commitment to the achievement of all pupils;
- take responsibility for innovation;
- take personal and collective responsibility for professional development;
- are willing to work collaboratively with other teachers and other professionals both day to day and in the development of their practice;

(Welsh Gov: Department of Education, 2018)

Above are just a few examples of the qualities that the Welsh Government believe an effective practitioner should hold. Thus, practitioner's must know how and why they need to be able to reflect on their practice, and ensure they dedicate time to doing this as this will provide them with opportunities to excel in practice and maintain these standards enable to provide children with quality services.

2.) The Importance of Reflective Practice

Paige et al. (2017) define reflection as having considerate feelings for scenarios and events, whilst contemplating who was involved, what happened and how it was approached and handled. Viewing the possibility that theory may highlight why and how it happened, as others may view some attitudes as insignificant but on further reflection can have a considerable effect on the scenario than was first thought. Therefore, to help gain a better understanding of reflective practice, practitioners can apply models of reflection to their work that they understand as it will enable them to develop reflective practice. Kolb (1984) reflective model displays how practitioners can learn from their experiences by reflecting and analysing to support experiences in the future. It starts with the concrete experience where something may happen that the practitioner wants to learn from. The reflective observation takes places as it gets the practitioner to think of what they experience and how they reacted. Next, abstract conceptualisation which is where the practitioner creates a hypothesis which means they have learned from the experience and them active experimentation is when the practitioner would experiment their theory whilst considering the outcomes. Kolb (1984) believed practitioners could learn from any experience, however, it can only be a lesson to learn from if practitioners dedicate time to opportunities of reflection, describe it and experiment with it in practice. In contrast, Moon (1999) would disagree with Kolb's learning cycle as she believed that practitioners have different stages of learning and reflection. She believed there were different stages to learning. Theses stages include the student noticing a topic as interesting, then the student makes sense of what they have seen, then make meaning and start asking questions to connect everything together. It is only in stages four and five Moon believes reflection takes place and this is when the student works with meaning and starts to research and then transformative learning takes place where the student develops their own ideas and know what to do next time in a similar scenario. Moon (2006) believed that practitioners gain a deeper understanding of the reflection process from drafting and redrafting learning journals.

3.) The Advantages/Disadvantages of Reflective Practice

Practitioners must consider the importance of reflective practice and why we must aim to all be reflective practitioners. Bolton (2014) believed that reflective practitioners are able to:

- Explore further in what they know or wish to know more about
- Discuss things we know, but are not aware that we know
- Explore what we do not know and would like to know
- Feel, believe, think, understand and value our role
- Understand that actions display real feelings
- Value our own feelings

(Bolton, 2014)

However, Paige et al. (2017) would disagree with Bolton's testimony because they believed practitioners should think about the short-term benefits of reflection but when they spoke to qualified teachers, the found out that the teachers do not engage regularly in reflective practice because they are not given the time to do so. Finlay (2008) explores the ethical concerns that surround reflective practice. She believes that reflective practice generates ethical concerns such as a right to privacy, informed consent, confidentiality and professional relationships. Finlay (2008) wants practitioners to be aware of the risks that surround reflective practice as reflection may have a 'profound emotional impact' on you, the person reflecting and this can be harmful. Boud and Walker (1998) support this statement as they question whether or not reflective practice should be compulsory for practitioners. Palaiologou (2016) believes because of the obligation practitioners have to fulfil statutory requirements such as following curriculum framework and still have to provide playful learning experiences for children, many practitioners struggle with maintaining a child-centred environment and therefore do not have the time to reflect on their practice. Therefore, to overcome these barriers, Ixer (2003) suggests that practitioners should seek advice from a non-judgemental source such as a mentor or manager they can relax around. Practitioners must feel safe enough and not just do what they think is expected of them. Knowledge of models such as Kolb, Gibbs etc. can give practitioners a better understanding of how to approach scenarios they may come across or things they would like to change but do not know where to start. Have a role model who makes time for reflective practice because then the practitioner can discuss ideas with them, also working in pairs or a group will give you more confidence to explore your options. Ensuring that you provide yourself with time and energy to reflect over your practice – ensure you are happy with the end results.

4.) The Practitioner

Reardon (2009) defines best practice as an effective way to deliver services to children and their families in a professional practice. Best practice links closely with providing quality services and the use of values and Sylva (2010) suggests there are three dimensions of quality services: the physical structure and the human resources, the processes which are the care and education children receive day-to-day and outcomes which are the children's' long term individual outcomes. Sylva (2010) believes that by using these dimensions, practitioners' have a clearer relationship with the children and the team they work with as it shows the quality of early childhood provision that is provided and the effect is has on the results of the children's' developmental outcomes because the working team around the children are highly educated. Personal, professional development is defined by Tickell's (2011) as 'an important contribution of experienced, well-trained and supported workforce for children's learning and developmental outcomes'. He discovered that those who engage in reflective practice when working with children, consider the effectiveness of their role whilst adhering to the curriculum and reflective practice will benefit your personal and professional development. Practitioners' can influence their knowledge, skills and values by reflecting on their own history within the working world as they are lived experiences and their professional and personal beliefs will entwine (Clough and Corbett, 2000). Thus of course links to Hallet, 2016 view of how everything discussed above comes down to linking theory to practice, and by reviewing theories such as Kolb, Gibbs, Piaget and Vygotsky, it enables the practitioner to connect their findings to practice and linking practice to theory.

Conclusion:

Reflective practice is common knowledge amongst practitioners' and an important one at that. Many theorists support reflective practice as a helpful way to build a practitioners' personal and professional development whilst still ensuring that children meet their learning outcomes. A knowledgeable practitioner benefits children as they know how to meet a child's educational needs.

Area for further development (provide further details)	Why?	How?	Who/Where?	When?
Knowledge Maths GCSE	I would like to gain my maths GCSE because this will help me to get onto the PGCE course which is what I will need to do to become a teacher.	I can do this by attending maths classes set up between the university and local colleges. I am even considering of contacting a private tutor as I feel this will benefit me more personally and I can be tutored when it suits me.	If I did it through university, I could do it on Friday's when I am free from lectures and placement or I could go after lectures on days I have university. If I had a tutor, I could go anytime after university/placement.	I would have to do this before applying for the PGCE course and I could potentially do it in 3 rd year when I will be free from placement.
Knowledge Recognise how parents contribute to the development of children/young people	I would like to learn more about how parents contribute towards school life as I have not had a lot of experience with parents. I think this would benefit me in understanding why parents feel like they should contribute towards school through things such as the PTA. I would like to find out how they balance their life around PTA commitments.	I would do this through my placement by speaking to my mentor and gaining permission from my personal tutor. I could also do it by going to a PTA meeting to gain more knowledge of what they do, and why they choose to do it.	I would do this through my placement in a local primary school. I could get more involved in events that take place in the school such as fairs, charity events and discos that the parents help to organise and I could offer my help.	I could do this during placement, after placement and on evenings events in my school are taking place.
Skills Gain better IT skills	I think if I gained better ICT skills I would be able to help children learn more efficiently when using laptops/iPad's.	I could go to the technician in my placement and ask him to teach me the basics at a time that suited him. I could also ask my mentor and watch YouTube videos in my own time.	I could go to study skills in the university to help gain a better understanding of programmes such as Microsoft word.	I could speak to my mentor and the technician in placement when I am there or at a time that suits them. I could go to study skills in university before or after lectures and I can learn online in my own time.
Skills Public speaking/self-confidence	To be able to be more confident when speaking to adults who are more educated than me and to be able to deal with parents efficiently. I want to be seen as if I can pull through anything life throws my way.	I could go to study skills and just chat to them about how I feel. I could practice my speech in front of the mirror or to someone I am confident around. I will not accept failure and try to rid myself of negative thoughts – I can do anything if I put my mind to it!	I could go to study skills in university or talk to a lecturer. I could practice my speech anywhere such as the house or university. I could also read a self-care book.	I would do it anytime that suited me such as after lectures or placement and in my spare time I would make time.
Values Appreciate every child	To have the knowledge that every child is diverse, has the right to have a voice and be heard. Understand no two children are the same and that they all have different needs and abilities and I should accept them and respect them for who they are. To understand all children have rights.	I could do this by reading up on the UNCRC's 'rights of the child' and learn them off by heart so I know exactly what a child is entitled to. By experiencing different ages of children to understand all the different stages they go through. Talk to children, let them know I am here if they need me.	I would do this at placement and discuss it with my mentor and other members of staff. I could also talk to my lecturer if I do not understand something. I would read up on the UNCRC's 'rights of the child' in my own time.	I can do this now if I wanted to. I could talk to my mentor or tutor via email if I needed their advice.
Values Efficiency	So everyone I work with or study with can rely on me when they need me to be with them at a certain time/for help.	I would do this by being more organised with my time keeping and plan ahead.	I can do this by myself at home by writing things down in a diary so I do not forget.	I can practice this everyday for the rest of my life and ensure I stick to it
Other? Learn more Welsh	I would do this so I can understand conversations and get involved. To help benefit the children in my care and be able to expand their language of Welsh and knowledge.	I could attend welsh lessons through the university and go on the welsh course or do it in my free time.	I would ask for advice from the university as to where to go or who to talk to. I could ask my mentor for help as she knows the basics of Welsh that I would need to know in school.	I would do this in my free time, after lectures and placement. I would learn Welsh until I felt confident enough to speak it fluently.

Brief description of the activity (no more than 50 words) Teaching children aged 4-5 how to clean their teeth properly, with the appropriate method and discuss things that affect our dental hygiene. I taught them how to clean them properly without having to spit anything out as this is less effective.
Aim/Objective of the activity The aim of the activity is to educate children on the importance of teeth cleaning and dental hygiene whilst discussing the importance of a healthy lifestyle and a healthy diet. Educate them about how much sugar is in foods and how sugar causes decay and discuss healthy alternatives.
Your role my role is to teach children how much toothpaste should be applied to the toothbrush – a pea sized amount. I discussed with the children the method we should use which is cleaning the teeth in a circular method so the gums do not get irritated. It was my job to transfer a small blob of toothpaste from a paper towel to the children’s toothbrushes whilst wearing a latex glove. I handed the children paper towels so they could wipe their mouths afterwards. Before the activity started, I ensured that the children had all washed their hands before touching their toothbrushes to try and eliminate as many germs as possible. I provided supervision to ensure that the children are cleaning their teeth effectively but also as a healthy and safety concern so the children do no hurt one another with their toothbrushes. The children are separated into small groups so they can be restricted to a staff: child ratio so the adults did not feel overwhelmed with watching all the children at once. I kept the latex glove on until the activity finished. I timed the children for two minuets to ensure their teeth were cleaned efficiently. So the children did not get bored, I put a teeth cleaning song on the computer for them all to hear. Once the activity was complete, I washed and dried the toothbrushes and put them back into storage. I then grouped my children together and we went through a slideshow of healthy food, food that damages their teeth and what snacks they can bring to school in their lunchbox.
Positive aspects – why? The children listened very well to the slideshow and asked lots of questions. They seemed genuinely interested in what food was good for them and what was not. They seemed to be shocked at figures I displayed as to how many spoon’s of sugar go into their favourite snacks and sugary drinks. They even asked if we could continue the lesson another day and sample different fruits and vegetables in school – of course if I plan to do this in the future, I would have to send permission letters home before I carried the activity out. I felt like I had their attention and they were enjoying my activity.
Challenging aspects – why? The teeth cleaning activity itself did not go as well as I hoped it would. The children usually do this every day after lunch when they return to class. However, because a lot of the children have been ill over the last few weeks, we have not wanted to spread germs from the children to the toothbrushes because we only get a supply of toothbrushes when designed to smile come to visit which is every three months on average so to stop germs spreading quicker, we put a stop to it just until the majority of the children were better. Because of this, I felt that the children were out of routine with their teeth cleaning and took a longer than usual to settle down. One child also poked another child in the face with their toothbrush and it took me a while to calm the children down and I did find it challenging and so I asked for help from one of the teaching assistants.
What knowledge was demonstrated? I felt like I demonstrated good knowledge because I am qualified in Designed to smile which is teaching children how to clean their teeth efficiently. I feel like the knowledge I learned on the course really helped me structure this activity the way I planned. I feel like I have also learned a lot just by observing how the teachers have done it and I have applied this knowledge to my own practice. I also spoke about healthy items in Welsh and taught the children about fruit and vegetables in Welsh.
What skills were demonstrated? I felt like I demonstrated good verbal and communication skills. I spoke clearly, all of the children seemed to understand me and follow my instructions. I feel like I displayed confidence when taking charge of this activity and it has helped me see that I am a confident practitioner and I can teach children effectively.
Which values were demonstrated? I think that I valued every child – I did not single any child out. I listened to all of their questions and answered them to the best of my knowledge. I also feel like I planned it out well because timewise everything went smoothly. I did not think I would fill the time slot of the lesson all into the afternoon period because it is quite long, but with the PowerPoint and discussion I filled the time up so I have to say I valued the time efficiency.
What could have been done differently? Why? I feel that if I thought a bit more about the activity, I could have done the activity the children asked me about during this one of the fruit tasting. If I thought about it, I could have sent out permission letters and included a tasting of different fruits within the lesson. I would have liked to have done this because obviously from this activity, the children enjoyed discussing fruit but I thought they would not enjoy the activity as much as they did so next time I do an activity like this I will plan further ahead and possibly included a taster session after the presentation.

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