

'Design a briefing paper to explain the significance of reflective practice to facilitate professional development in the early years workforce'

Reflective practice is a continuous cycle that happens during learning where professional practitioners take time to assess, think, challenge and change their practices in order to incorporate new understandings and advance children's learning and development.

It is important that practitioners are using reflective practice in everyday learning because it allows you to identify and challenge children's learning and development. By doing so you will start to appreciate positive experiences and learn ways to identify and improve your practice. Many theorists believe reflective practice helps practitioners process the learning development.

Being reflective in the early year's means being consistent questioning what they see, hear and feel around them. It involves sharing insights with their colleagues daily and requires the practitioner to be able to adjust and challenge assumptions around them. By doing this they are searching for deeper meanings to what they hear and not hear. This allows the practitioner to develop and consider reasons why.

Reflective practice is a process of regularly reviewing your own work and the provision within the work setting looking and making improvements. In order to reflect the practitioner needs to

- Have time and space to think
- Ask reflective questions
- Talk to colleagues and other professionals to share experiences and exchange ideas
- Access professional development
- Be able to stand back from given work situation to be able to observe the activities of the day in a objective manner
- Have regular reviews
- Have support off a mentor

By reflecting the practitioner is able to

- Take time to ask questions
- Make connections
- See patterns
- Link experience and practice with theory
- Identify knowledge, understanding and skills
- Make recommendations for modifications to practice

This helps us to make better sense of a practitioner's role. Drummond (infisher 20022;194) states the importance of self-knowledge. A effective practitioner is able to understand themselves, their knowledge, their feelings and the framework within which is why they understand children. It's important to do it as it shows continuous professional development (CPD). Showing that you are using effective communication, working as a team, being mindful and critically aware of your actions, knowledge and skills development by recognising the faults and correcting them.

(Schon,1983) states that reflective practitioners are exactly the same as a skilled practitioner as he believes using experiences for the base of an assessment and then referring to existing theories to help develop effective action strategies was the way forward. It was simply not to learn a new skill but to learn new theories of action as said by (Argyris & Schon, 1974).

Schon believes in everyday life we are reflective but states how we develop from strategies that is what is most effective. His theory consists of two things, reflection in action and reflection on action. Reflection in action means reflecting on something as something happens by considering the situation, deciding how to act and then acting immediately. Reflection in action also means professional thoughtfulness, keeping key values to the front of your mind, recognising choice points and using even limited times to make the best decision for the moment. Reflection on action means reflecting on the incident after it happens meaning you reconsider the situation and then consider what needs changing for the future. Doing this by thinking and talking over what has happened with

the aim of learning what went well, what might be changed another time and why. The term is usually applied to past events but can be used for forward thinking.

Unlike Schon, Piaget believes children learn better when in a busy working environment. Practitioners reflect better when the flow is disturbed. He states that children incorporate new experiences in their existing ways of acting upon and understanding the world. Children steadily encounter experiences, but this will not fit their existing mental processes. Through accommodating children then they will develop a fresh way of looking and acting upon the world.

(Schon,2011) promotes values to practitioners, informing them to step back and reflect on what has happened and identify what has gone well and what can be improved to inform future planning and practice. His reflection on action translates into reflection in action.

Similar to Schon, here are some reflective models by other theorists. Gibbs believed in the model of reflection. There is six steps to the model. A description of what happened, feelings, Evaluation, Analysis, conclusion and action plan. By doing this Gibbs states that you are able to write better reflections and is able to reflect better as you have the space to go into detail where as Kolb's Experiential learning cycle is split into four sections. Concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. Kolb's model describes a active process of learning. This approach is sometimes called a transmission model as learners are in a passive role until they are equipped to tell another professional what to do.

Driscoll's model of reflection is being taken into three sections. What happened, describe a event or action, why the action or event was significant and then what is the plan of action meaning how will you use the information that has been gathered to inform future practice. Some practitioners believe Driscoll's method is a very easy method to follow to start and then as you become more confident with reflecting you are able to build on the information you have to develop further.

By implementing theories into our role as a professional we are following and trusting in the process. Some will use one theory instead of the other but the important thing is that you are reflecting on your practice as it benefits you and the child. The models all have the same aim to reflect but Gibbs has split the model into 6 sections In order to get more details. The important key when reflecting on development is to be very honest and to the point.

The term 'professional' means a lot of different things for different people. To some it means people who have a qualification or a specific expertise in something but to early years professionals it all depends on the individual and how much value and importance of qualities the individual demonstrates in practice.

In order to improve the practitioner should consider three things. The provisional nature of knowledge, the importance of the learning process and the practitioner as a researcher. These are paramount to improve quality in the early years. Being reflective means, you are learning not to be afraid of change and fixed in comfort zones but are open challenge and risk creative approaches. (Vygotsky,1978) states professionals that are open to challenges and are unafraid of changes are most likely to be more confident and move beyond know. Therefore, they are developing through their own zone of Proximal development.

Being reflective can offer support to develop as a professional because by reflecting and recording what they seen, heard and understood enables the professional to analyse, challenge and clarify their thoughts. It is helpful because writing down in journals can unlock new pathways into understanding. It enables the professional to form a better understanding of the issue and allows them to conclude a balanced view on how they are going to move forward positively.

(McNiff,2010) states his methods recognises and celebrates the involvement the practitioner finds in the process by questioning the practitioner's perspective and interpretation of what is being observed in order to be able to improve everyday practice. He states it is important to know all that is going on in the practice, what is working and not working and what can be improved further. True value of reflective practice resolves around how much the practitioner wants to improve and better themselves and those around them.

As a professional it is important to assess not only the children but also yourself. In order to be a reflective professional, you need to be continually reviewing and developing your own practice. By doing this it is crucial that the professional is

- Supporting children's learning
- Have a good understanding of child's development
- Be able to plan for, extend and intervene in when appropriate
- Be able to manage change
- Work with other professionals
- Work in a team
- Be aware of self
- Have effective communication and interpersonal skills

Doing this will support you to develop as a professional as you are continuously reflecting on your work ethic and on the children and confidently progressing day to day. By documenting the development, you are showing evidence of what has happened and is able to refer to it if anybody asks of the evidence. As people we are always reflective. Reflective in the way that we learn through experiences, we reflect on what has happened, how we react to it and how we will react next time. Some reflect by the format SWOT. This is where you reflect on yourself by writing what is your strengths and weaknesses, your threats and your opportunities. This is often used in early years settings to help the professionals recognise their good and bad. If you are going to be observing children you are going to need to be reflective on yourself too as no matter how good the practice is every practitioner should be open to continued professional development and learning. Whatever your working circumstances the fruit of reflection needs to be expressed through practice and will then result and impact on the children as well as your colleagues. (Bronfenbrenner,1979) practitioners can make a significant difference to the atmosphere in their place of work by communicating and reflecting. He states that good practice in understanding child development including educational practice requires a deep understanding of the developing child. He insisted on locating development within environmental systems but defined the ecology of human development as involving.

Professionals in the early years settings need to view themselves as life long learners themselves first as if they don't, how can they expect to develop positive dispositions towards learning (Lindon,2012a). A key element to being reflective is communication. (Dunhill,2009) states communication is central to working with children. It involves listening, questioning, understanding and responding to what is being communicated by children, young people and those caring for them. Not only listening but being able to communicate verbally and non verbal. When speaking non verbally (Orey,2014) states 55% of the pie is based on your body movements, 7% on the words you use and 38% on the tone of voice that is used when speaking. All of these are factors of communication. Another factor to consider is inclusive practice and the importance of it. It involves listening effectively, developing relationships, observing and assessing, respecting diversity, defining terms and teamwork with inclusive leadership as stated by (Brodie & Savage, 2015)

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