

Contents

Element 1	Page 2
An evaluation of Gibbs Reflective Model (1988) and the “What? So What? Now What?” Reflective Model (Rolfe et al, 2001) as tools for effective practice within early years.	
Element 2	Page 5
Briefing Paper	
Element 3	Page 7
Reflective log	
Element 4	Page 9
Personal Development Plan	
References	Page 11

Element 1 An evaluation of Gibbs Reflective Model (1988) and the “What? So What? Now What?” Reflective Model (Rolfe et al, 2001) as tools for effective practice within early years.

Reflective practice is a concept of increasing prevalence within the field of education and related research (Gillies, 2017). It is an accepted means of improving quality of provision and developing working practices in the Early Years Foundation Phase in Wales and is expected to be an integral part of designing individual curricula under the new Curriculum for Wales 2022 (Maynard, 2010; Welsh Government, 2020). Various models and tools have been created to aid reflection and are used by students and practitioners to provide prompts for discussion or documentation, they include Gibbs Reflective Model (1988) and the “What? So What? Now What?” Reflective Model, which was based on the questions of Borton in the 1970’s, developed by Driscoll in the 1990’s and more recently Rolfe et al (2001).

Studies have found the use of frameworks to be helpful as an aid to professional reflection as they provide focus (Markannen et al, 2020). Gillies (2017) talks of the need for reflection to have clarity and structure, both models provide this structure as they consist of stages which are moved through in order. Gibbs model has greater distinction between the stages and the heading for each stage is explicit and clear. Despite using simple language, Rolfe et al’s model has vague headings which do not provide such clarity, and are open to wider interpretation.

Both models are cyclical, making them useful for repeated events and illustrating the fact that reflection is a continuous process, where events and practice are revisited, evaluated and meaning is sought (Paige-Smith and Craft, 2011; Reed and Canning, 2010), though they could work equally well for stand-alone events. They differ in the fact that Gibbs model suggests that something should always change as a result of reflection by having an action plan as one of the stages. The more open What Now? question, could result in no changes being made, and this is also valid as an outcome (University of Cambridge, 2020).

Many reflective models have originated in the healthcare sector, and both models use language which could cross disciplines and situations. A notable difference is that Gibbs model specifically refers to feelings, which may be at odds with the concept of objectively and critically analyzing, however, Reed and Canning (2010) state that

reflection in itself is an emotional response which works with knowledge and understanding. Paige-Smith and Craft (2011) talk of “building bridges” between personal and professional lives, suggesting that emotional aspects must be attended to. It is questionable how honest people will be regarding feelings, and there is also the possibility that feelings around an event may change over time and may have been influenced by outside factors.

Linked to the emotional aspects of reflection, is the fact that many early years practitioners do not view themselves as professionals and lack confidence in their practice and their own abilities to reflect upon practice (McFarland et al, 2009; Trodd and Dickerson, 2018). The fact that Rolfe et al’s model has fewer steps and simple, unthreatening language could make it a more attractive aid for practitioners lacking confidence, and those who are new to reflective practice. Bleach (2014) highlights the fact that reflecting with others can aid the acquisition of professional language, knowledge of which boosts practitioner confidence, which could lead to a willingness to explore a slightly more complex model, such as Gibbs. Communities of practice, though challenging, can promote confidence and increase knowledge (Miller-Young, 2016).

There is a view that reflection is more productive, worthwhile and valid when shared with other professionals, and that the views of others are necessary in order to see things from different viewpoints (McFarland, 2009; Gillies, 2017; Trodd and Dickerson, 2018). It has already been noted that Gibbs reference to feelings may restrict contributions, and it should be noted that the success of reflection lies in the honesty of those contributing, and knowing reflections will be shared with others can affect how they are documented (Coward, 2011). Rolfe et al’s reflective model may lend itself well to collective reflection as the same questions can be used for reflection of varying depths and by those in different roles, it lends itself to the novice as well as the expert.

Venninen (2012) refers to layers of reflection, where reflective practice is carried out on a micro level, as an individual or in small teams, and at a macro level, which refers to those groups working at improving practice on a broader spectrum. It could be argued that the looseness of Rolfe et al’s model lends itself to all levels and layers of reflection. Whereas Gibbs model, with no mention of objective or critical thinking, and the inclusion of an emotional response element is more useful in reflections at the

micro level, what Schön (1983) referred to as the “swampy lowland”, where every-day experiences and the responses of stakeholders including the children, their families and practitioners occur.

It should be noted that simply documenting events with the use of a model does not necessarily lead to effective reflections. Gillies (2017) considers reflection a skill to be honed, through exposure to a variety of research evidence and the views of others both within the sector and in the wider social and cultural context. A need to train practitioners how to reflect effectively and to link reflective practice with professional development in order to promote practitioner confidence and wellbeing has been identified (Cigala, 2019; Trodd and Dickerson, 2019; Markkanen, 2020). The effectiveness of such training, as with all training, links with how it is approached, and Dewey (1933, cited in Warwick, 2007, p.2) identified a need for personal attributes of “open-mindedness, responsibility and whole-heartedness” to accompany the process. This suggests that either model may be used to provide the structure to discuss or record reflections, but the attitude of the reflector is key.

To conclude, reflective models are recognized as useful tools for practitioners (Markkanen et al., 2020), and collaborative reflection with a community of practice is particularly effective (McFarland, 2009; Gillies, 2017; Trodd and Dickerson, 2018). Gibbs reflective model benefits from simple, relevant headings, can be used for repeated or one-off events and translates well from different disciplines. However, it does not reference critical or objective thinking, it relies on the honesty of those reflecting, particularly regarding emotional aspects, the inclusion of which may not appeal to everyone. Rolfe et al’s model uses unthreatening language and few steps, it also benefits from being cyclical and useful in various circumstances and at all levels. It could be viewed as over-simplistic, vague and lacking in emotion.

Practitioners will have individual preferences over which reflective model they like to use (University of Cambridge, 2020), and some may find that trying to fit reflections under headings and into different boxes imposes too many constraints (Coward, 2011). Reflective practice should form part of the beliefs and practices of all practitioners and the pedagogy of early years education and care (Alvi and Gillies, 2020).

Element 2 Briefing Paper

Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is the term given to an outlook whereby practitioners are continually in the process of looking at and thinking about their approach and practice, with the aim of modifying and developing in order to continually improve services (PACEY, 2016; Lindon and Brodie, 2016).

Early years practitioners can use critical reflection as part of a continuous improving process for practice and learning environments. It offers a view of practice through the eyes of a child, their family, the community and other educators and should be embedded in the pedagogy of early years provision (ACECQA, 2019).

Johns (2013) believes that reflection requires mindfulness, where one notices and is aware of the things around them, including themselves and their relationships with others, and what they are doing and why, without passing judgement.

More information on an introduction to reflective practice can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r1aYWbLi0U8>.

Schön (1983) defines two main types of reflection:



When working in the field of early years, it is not possible to pause whatever is happening and reflect upon how to react. Regular, effective reflection on action ensures that practitioners are able to make informed and creative decisions in action (Lindon, 2012).

John Dewey (1933, cited in Lindon, 2012) stated 3 characteristics for reflective practitioners:

- Open-mindedness
- Responsibility
- Wholeheartedness

Reflection requires practitioners to look, learn and understand.

Reflection on action is sometimes referred to as reflexive practice, acknowledging that it involves stepping back and looking back at own practice (Stedmon and Dallos, 2009).

(Lifelong Learning with OT, 2016).

Theory underpins and influences practice, and reflection allows practitioners to evaluate their practices and beliefs against theory, as part of a pedagogy of quality (Gillies, 2017; Alvi and Gillies, 2020).

Effective reflection leads to:

- **Confident practitioners**, who feel supported and knowledgeable about theory (Bleach, 2014; Trodd and Dickerson, 2019).
- **Highly trained and qualified practitioners** who have identified areas for professional development (Lindon, 2012; PACEY, 2016).
- **Quality services** with better interactions and increased "sustained shared thinking" (Cigala et al, 2019; Siraj-Blatchford, 2002).
- **Better outcomes** for services users, which continues into primary education (Sylva et al., 2004; Trodd and Dickerson, 2019).
- **Improved well-being** and feelings of increased agency and efficacy for teachers (Cigala et al, 2019).

Research highlighted the importance of the practitioner in implementation of the Early Years Foundation Phase in Wales, reflection is seen to be an integral part of this, in terms of identifying need for change and improvement and in continuous professional development and training (Maynard, 2010). The new Curriculum for Wales 2022 also emphasises the need for continual review and reflection, professional inquiry and learning, and the importance of sharing knowledge and best practice (Welsh Government, 2020).

Methods of documenting for reflection

- Writing in a journal
- Jotting notes and collating them
- Recording or videoing oneself
- Minutes of team meetings
- Transcripts of conversations

This formal documentation can be combined with less formal methods, such as memories, drawings and mind maps to aid reflection. The Reggio approach sees all stakeholders, including children and their families involved in the documentation (Paige-Smith and Craft, 2011).

Barriers to reflection

Practitioners identify a number of barriers to reflective practice (Paige-Smith and Craft, 2011):

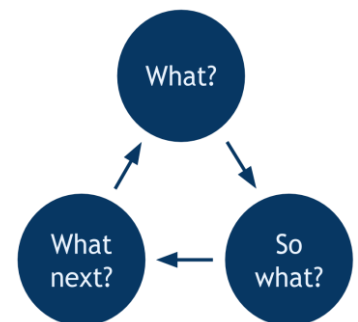
- Not having the time or space
- Not knowing how and with whom information should be shared
- Balancing needs with expectations
- Linking theory with practice
- Remaining positive and open to new ideas

Reflection should be viewed as an essential part of professional practice, and as such, time should be allocated in the working day for team meetings. Using Belbin's (2006) taxonomy of team roles can help to organise group reflections.

Action Oriented Roles	Shaper	Challenges the team to improve.
	Implementer	Puts ideas into action.
	Completer Finisher	Ensures thorough, timely completion.
People Oriented Roles	Coordinator	Acts as a chairperson.
	Team Worker	Encourages cooperation.
	Resource Investigator	Explores outside opportunities.
Thought Oriented Roles	Plant	Presents new ideas and approaches.
	Monitor-Evaluator	Analyzes the options.
	Specialist	Provides specialized skills.

Edward De Bono's 6 Thinking hats can help to structure group reflections and ensure all practitioners have a voice. For more information visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHiwpz7r4wY>.

There are a number of models available to help structure and focus reflections, such as that below, put forward by Rolfe et al. (2001).



(Open University, 2017).

These 3 simple questions can act as a catalyst for critical evaluation, and can aid reflection at all levels.

Johns (2004, cited in Paige-Smith and Craft, 2011, p51) identifies "reflective cues" to support reflection. These include focussing on what was significant, questioning how oneself and others were feeling, asking what knowledge informed any decisions made and looking at alternative ways of responding should the situation arise again in the future. These sit alongside his own model for structured reflection.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Article 3 requires that when adults make decisions, they should consider their affect upon children (Unicef, 2019). In early years care and education, practitioners make decisions which affect children all day, every day, and as such, have a duty to ensure these decisions are informed and considered. Reflective practice allows practitioners to listen to the voice of the child and to act upon this information, within a framework of sound theory, based upon knowledge, skills and values. This should be facilitated by collaborative working in a community of practice where reflection is embedded.

Element 3 Reflective log

Activity	
A selection of large verb/action flashcards are spread out on the floor. Children take turns to throw a beanbag and then say the action word that the card depicts. The card is then taken away and play continues until all cards have disappeared. The activity took place in the Cych Meithrin, during a morning session, as part of focussed task time. I was the only practitioner with a group of 3 children, aged between 3years and 3years 6months. 2 of the children receive support with speech and language.	
Aims/ Objectives	Achieved ✓/✗
• To teach verbs (words ending in ing) and observe/assess current levels ✓ • To promote turn-taking skills ✓ • To increase confidence in group activities ✓	
Your role	
• To plan and carry out an activity for speech development • To extend and improve vocabulary through modelling • To assess speech and language levels to inform planning • To ensure that all children take turns and have the opportunity to contribute I have responsibility for arranging and carrying out activities with the children who have speech and language difficulties, that help them work towards their targets, are enjoyable and play-based, and which fit in with the current theme wherever possible.	
Positive aspects and ways of developing these	
All of the children were smiling and showed signs of enjoying the task when it was their turn. All of the children made positive contributions. There was evidence of increased confidence and levels of engagement with one child, who has been identified with a need in this area. I was able to write observations throughout, which will be used in group staff reflections and to inform planning of future activities. I was able to offer them learning through playing a game, which can be adapted easily to the needs of different children. Different cards can be used for different themes or different types of words, such as nouns or emotions. The game can be played indoors or outdoors. It allowed them to be up and moving around and was sensory with colourful beanbags.	
Challenging aspects and the possible reasons behind them	
One child wandered off a few times whilst waiting for his turn, I believe this may be his way of showing me that he was bored. Although he returned, I felt frustrated that I did not anticipate this, as I know he finds it difficult to wait for his turn. At times I felt uncertain about whether I should be using predominantly Welsh or English as the language of the setting is Welsh but the children with speech and language difficulties have their interventions carried out in English, as this is their home language. I felt that this impacted on my confidence carrying out the activity and the flow of my speech, which is important in an activity designed to aid speech and language development.	

Knowledge demonstrated
I used my knowledge of speech and language development and speech levels learnt on the Elklan course, and through further reading on this subject. I have regular professional discussions with a specialist speech therapist to devise the activities to target the specific needs of the children. I have knowledge of the benefits of learning through play and child development through my qualifications and experience.
Skills demonstrated
My planning and organisation skills ensured that all of the resources were prepared in advance and setting up time was reduced. It also meant that I had pen and paper to hand to note down observations. I allowed the children time to respond, but used appropriate prompting when needed and adapted my responses to suit. I used modelling to help develop correct speech.
Values demonstrated
The children all chose to take part and were allowed to leave the game if they chose to. All children were treated with fairness, with an equal number of turns. I was patient when children needed thinking time, and they were all praised for any effort made. The children were treated with equity as they received prompting or modelling which reflected their own individual needs.
Things which could be changed in future and rationale behind this
In future it may be beneficial to reduce the group to a paired activity to reduce waiting time. I think this is something that will be dependent upon the age and stage of whichever children are taking part. Alternatively, children could carry out a task at the end of their turn, like putting the bean bag back in a basket or posting the flashcard in a post box. I will look for turn taking opportunities in other activities as this is an important skill in speech and language development. I will clarify the language to be used in advance with the team, perhaps children can be grouped according to their home language for language activities. This will be done in collaboration with the leader and the speech and language therapist.

Element 4 Personal Development Plan

Area for further development	Reason	How this will be achieved	Who/Where?	When?
ICT skills and confidence.	To deliver the new Digital Competency Framework as part of the new curriculum and to improve personal confidence around IT skills.	By shadowing my colleagues and by carrying out online learning at home.	Emma & Caryl in work. Free Open Learn course on Open University.	January – March 2021
Welsh written skills and advanced spoken Welsh.	As part of delivering Curriculum Cymreig. To improve my skills in completing paperwork and planning in Welsh as part of the Welsh ethos of the setting. To improve personal confidence in this area.	By reading work related documents and having work related discussions in Welsh wherever possible in order to increase my vocabulary and practice skills. By aiming to complete my paperwork within the setting in Welsh, and getting it checked by the leader.	With colleagues and other professionals who visit the setting, in work and on training courses.	From September onwards.
Knowledge and skills related to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).	I have become aware of children within the setting and within my groups who would benefit from additional support related to ACEs. It links with relationship-based play and a previous training course attended.	ACE's Training course.	Ceredigion County Council Felinfach.	Autumn/ Winter 2020 training programme

Area for further development	Reason	How this will be achieved	Who/Where?	When?
Incredible years.	This course is recommended by the link teacher from the local authority for all Early Years Practitioners in the county and aims to promote good practice and consistency around positive behaviour.	Training course	Ceredigion County Council Felinfach	Autumn/ Winter 2020 training programme
Mindfulness and wellbeing	To improve personal wellbeing and to enable me to transfer some of the mindfulness and relaxation skills to the children in the setting. It relates to an element of the Sustainable and Healthy Preschools accreditation that we are working towards in the setting.	Returning to yoga classes	Lyndsay Llanilar village hall	When sessions resume (September)
Complete BA in Early Years Education and Care	To enhance my knowledge and build upon my current qualifications at Level 4. To increase my career prospects and give me the confidence to apply for posts in the field of early years.	Continued study and reading. Completing all assignments to the best of my ability and in a timely manner.	University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Carmarthen Campus.	Summer 2021
Update and further knowledge around speech, language and communication.	To extend on current skills base and benefit groups and individuals I support with ALN and speech and language difficulties.	Participating in the Early Years Summit on Speech, Language and Communication.	Online discussions by Kathy Brodie.	June 2020

References

- ACECQA (2017) *Critical reflection – Recording and sharing information* [video]. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGvamqfN09Q> (Accessed 9 June 2020).
- ACECQA (2019) *Critical reflection in practice* [video]. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UqjEY-kJFjo> (Accessed 9 June 2020).
- Alvi, E. and Gillies, R. (2020) 'Promoting self-regulated learning through experiential learning in the early years of school: a qualitative case study', *European Journal of Teacher Education*. DOI: 10.1080/02619768.2020.1728739.
- Belbin, R. *Team Roles Taxonomy* [Table]. Available at: <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/12/7a/59/127a5924121168abe86d9d872dbdb02e.jpg> (Accessed 13 June 2020).
- Bleach, J. (2014) 'Developing professionalism through reflective practice and ongoing professional development', *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 22(2), pp.185-197. DOI: 10.1080/1350293X.2014.883719.
- Cigala, A. (2019) 'Reflective Practice: A method to Improve Teachers' Well-Being. A Longitudinal Training in Early Childhood Education and Care Centers', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02574.
- Coward, M. (2011) 'Does the use of reflective models restrict critical thinking and therefore learning in nurse education? What have we done?' *Nurse Education Today*, 31, pp. 883-886. DOI: 10.1016/j.nedt.2011.01.012.
- Dawson, P. (2012) *Reflective practice* [video]. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r1aYWbLj0U8> (Accessed 13 June 2020).
- Early Years Alliance (2016) *Reflective practice as a way of being*. <https://www.eyalliance.org.uk/news/2016/05/reflective-practice-way-being> (Accessed 20 May 2020).
- EPM (2019) *Gibbs Reflective Cycle Explained* [video]. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-gbczr0IRf4> (Accessed 8 June 2020).

Gibbs, G. (1988) *Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods*. London: Further Education Unit.

Gillies, D. (2017) 'Developing the Thoughtful Practitioner', *A companion to Research in Teacher Education*. DOI: 10.1007/978-981-10-4075-7_2.

Johns, C. (2013) *Becoming a reflective practitioner* 3rd Ed. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.

Lifelong Learning with OT (2016) *Guide to models of reflection -when and why should you use different ones?* [blog] Available at: <https://lifelonglearningwithot.wordpress.com/2016/05/02/different-models-of-reflection-using-them-to-help-me-reflect/> (Accessed 11 June 2020).

Lindon, J. (2012) *Reflective Practice and Early Years Professionalism* 2nd Ed. London: Hodder.

Lindon, J. and Brodie, K. (2016) *Understanding Child Development 0-8 Years* 4th Ed. London: Hodder Education.

Markkanen, P. (2020) 'A reflective cycle: Understanding challenging situations in a school setting', *Educational Research*, 62(1), pp. 46-62. DOI: 10.1080/00131881.2020.1711790.

Maynard, T. et al. (2010) *The Teaching and Learning Research Programme in Wales: The Foundation Phase*. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

McFarland, L. et al (2009) 'Reflective Practice and Self-Evaluation in Learning Positive Guidance: Experiences of Early Childhood Practicum Students', *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 36, pp. 505-511. DOI: 10.1007/s10643-009-0315-2.

Miller-Young, J. (2016) 'How did I get here? Reflections on Learning from Multidisciplinary Communities of Practice', *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching & Learning Journal*, 9(1). Available at: https://www.kpu.ca/sites/default/files/Transformative%20Dialogues/TD.9.1.3_Miller-Young_Learning_from_Multidisciplinary_CoPs.pdf (Accessed 1 June 2020).

Open University (2017) *Learning Through Reflective Practice*. Available at: <https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/mod/page/view.php?id=76089> (Accessed 12 June 2020).

PACEY (2016) *Developing Self Reflective Practice*. Available at: [https://www.pacey.org.uk/Pacey/media/Website-files/PACEY%20member%20practice%20guides%20\(PDFs\)/PG04-self-reflective-practice.pdf](https://www.pacey.org.uk/Pacey/media/Website-files/PACEY%20member%20practice%20guides%20(PDFs)/PG04-self-reflective-practice.pdf) (Accessed 20 May 2020).

Paige-Smith, A. and Craft, A. (2011) *Developing Reflective Practice in the Early Years* 2nd Ed. Berkshire: McGraw Hill.

Reed, M. and Canning, N. (2010) *Reflective practice in the early years*. California: SAGE.

Rolfe, G. et al. (2001) *Critical reflection for nursing and the helping professions*. Hampshire: Palgrave.

Schön, D. (1983) *Reflective Practitioner – How Professionals Think in Action*. USA: Basic Books Inc.

Sellars, M. (2017) *Reflective Practice for Teachers* 2nd Ed. London: SAGE

Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2002) *Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years*. Norwich: DfES.

Stedmon, J. and Dallos, R. (2009) *Reflective Practice in Psychotherapy and Counselling*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

Sylva, K. et al. (2004) *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: Final Report*. Nottingham: DfES Publications.

Tarrant, P. (2017) *Reflective Practice and Professional Development*. Thousand Oaks CA: SAGE Publications.

The University of Edinburgh (2019) *Gibbs Reflective Cycle*. Available at: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/reflection/reflectors-toolkit/reflecting-on-experience/gibbs-reflective-cycle> (Accessed 8 June 2020).

Trodd, L. and Dickerson, C. (2018) “‘I enjoy learning’: developing early years practitioners’ identities as professionals and as professional learners”, *Professional Development in Education*, 45(3), pp.356-371. DOI: 10.1080/19415257.2018.1459788.

UNICEF (2019) *Convention on the Rights of the Child For every child, every right*. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention> (Accessed 28 April 2020).

University of Cambridge (2020) *Reflective Practice Toolkit*. Available at: <https://libguides.cam.ac.uk/reflectivepracticetoolkit/models> (Accessed 11 June 2020).

University of Cumbria (2016) *Rolfe et al's (2001) Reflective Model*. Available at: <https://my.cumbria.ac.uk/media/MyCumbria/Documents/ReflectiveModelRolfe.pdf> (Accessed 8 June 2020).

University of Guelph (2018) *What is a Critical Reflection? Introducing the "What, So What, Now What" Model* [video]. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGyjF9Ngd8Y> (Accessed 9 June 2020).

Venninen, T. et al. (2012) 'Creating Conditions for Reflective Practice in Early Childhood Education' *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, 6, pp.1-15. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/2288-6729-6-1-1>.

Warwick, P. (2007) *Reflective practice: some notes on the development of the notion of professional reflection*. Available at: <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/13026/1/3573.pdf> (Accessed 13 June 2020).

Welsh Government (2018) *Digital Competence Framework Guidance*. Cardiff: Welsh Government.

Welsh Government (2020) *Designing your curriculum – Implementation and practical considerations*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/designing-your-curriculum/implementation-and-practical-considerations/#page-wrapper> (Accessed 10 June 2020).