

Module Code: ECEY4009
Student Number: 2406598
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Part 1: Personal Development Plan (PDP)

Introduction: The successful Professional Practitioner must take on leadership and employability skills, which is fundamental in Early Years Professionalism.				
Success Criteria: To be equipped with the right skills and knowledge required to become a successful Professional Practitioner, in a student-led environment.				
Learning Objectives:	Actions:	Resources:	Target Date:	Success Criteria:
To complete the “Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedure” course.	This course will give me the opportunity to explore children’s rights, in the school community. I will gain an insight into the fundamental principles of safeguarding rules.	Login to iDev, and enrol to one of their modules, on safeguarding policy. URL: https://vog.learningportal.com/login/forgot_password.php “Wales' Safeguarding Procedures’ App”, outline different ways of protecting young children from abuse.	One month (November, 2024)	I will proactively seek to make a positive change in the local community. I will promote a safe and conducive learning environment in school. I will keep a record of all concerns and issues confidentially amongst learners.

		URL: https://www.safeguarding.wales/en/		
To review all of my knowledge upon “Emergency First Aid at Work.” (RQF)	To be equipped with all the skills and knowledge required to become a safe, and effective first aider. I will take care of any school incidents, whilst reporting them to prospective parents and staff.	“Training Qualifications UK” gives practical training, to becoming a first aid trainer. URL: https://www.tquk.org/ “STS First Aid”, provides a comprehensive Pediatrics Training course, which deals with “emergency situations carefully”. URL: https://sts-firstaid.co.uk/training-for-schools/	Two weeks (October, 2024)	I will be confident in providing first aid support to students when there is an injury. I will reassure that all health and safety requirements at met in school. I will try to maintain a calm atmosphere, when a situation breaks out.

To effectively develop communication and motivation skills in Education.	To maintain a professional dialogue between students, teachers and parents/ carers across the school cohort. I will also develop interpersonal communication skills, in primary teaching.	“Communication Essentials Training”, underpins all aspects of LSA roles and responsibility. URL: https://highspeedtraini ng.co.uk The University of KUL provides free online courses, that focus on self-empowerment and teacher dialogue. URL: https://www.kul.pl/art_99679.html	Sixth months (April, 2025) This is contingent upon the depth of the course studied.	I will build a positive relationship with parents, to resolve any problems. I will foster a learning environment, which will encourage trust, open-mindedness, and sympathy. I will ensure that all learners take full responsibility for their actions.
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To learn the Welsh Language skills, and apply it to a learning environment.	To explore the basic Welsh Language Structures, that are relevant in daily situations. To draw connections upon the Welsh themes, within Early Years Education.	WJEC's "Cymraeg i'r Teulu" course is designed to learn the foundations of Welsh language. URL: https://www.wjec.co.uk/qualifications/welsh-for-adults-qualification-suite/?sub_nav_level=books#tab_resources "Vale Connect – Learn Welsh" builds upon the proficiency of speaking in Welsh, locally and nationally. URL: https://learnwelsh.cymru/about-us/providers/vale-of-glamorgan-council/	Three months (January, 2025)	I will utilise the Welsh language independently, in a range of learning contexts. I will try to use this new knowledge, and embed it in the New Curriculum. This will lay the foundations for successful future learning education.
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Part 2: Briefing Paper

1. Introduction:

Reflective practice plays an integral role in Early Years Professionalism. It ensures that high-quality standards are maintained in educational settings (Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 1999, cited by Bleach, 2014). It effectively enables practitioners to apply their knowledge, whilst creating a productive and conducive working environment.

The practitioner's reflective activity is often displayed in a dynamic and competitive learning environment. Adapting to change and flexibility is crucial for further development and "understanding that knowledge is contestable" (Peeters and Vanderbroeck, 2011, cited by Canning *et al*, 2011). Critical reflection is a key factor in promoting new teaching strategies and innovations (Schon, 1983).

Reflective Practices has a wide range of applications in a learning-based curriculum, and its implications will be discussed in this paper.

2. Importance of Reflective Practices

Potter and Hodgson (2007, cited by Brock, 2015) emphasise how practitioners might apply their tacit knowledge, to see if their co-curricular activities are highly effective. Training programmes, provide teachers with a meaningful opportunity to develop reflective action skills, in a classroom-led environment. Developing an enquiring mindset, and critical thinking is a key skill in Early Years Professionalism.

The reflective practitioner must always face challenges and respond to the "socio-cultural context" of the situation. Bronfenbrenner (1986, cited by Canning *et al*, 2011) draws upon similarities between Potter and Hodgson's (2007) theory, by proposing that the practitioner's activity, is often impacted by a set of different "systems". For

example, the implementation of a new learning policy, or the management of children in their classroom, has a direct influence on the student's microsystem.

The reflective practitioner must also adapt to societal change, in a learning-based environment. Over 30% of respondents felt that good communication skills are essential, for learning professionals (*Siolta*) (Bleach, 2014). It is the teacher's responsibility to listen and respect the students' opinions. The practitioner must proactively take on "pedagogical knowledge," whilst carefully embedding the New Curriculum into their classroom-led activities.

In Schon's "Technical Rationality" theorem, he argues that professionals are like technical problem solvers. They must be prepared to use a range of strategies, required, to achieve this objective. Reflecting upon past experiences, gives, practitioners, the opportunity to enhance their own quality of learning, whilst re-constructing knowledge meaningfully (Appleby, 2010, cited by Canning *et al*, 2011).

Reflection acts as a framework for successful learning experiences, and it further empowers practitioners to complete their role successfully.

3. The Theory of Reflective Practices

In his work, Dewey (1933, cited by Hallet, 2012) argues that the three fundamental pillars of Early Years professionalism are: "open-mindedness, responsibility and wholeheartedness." Ownership for self-learning and education is important for teachers, in their further understanding of the curriculum. Working in partnership with parents, enables confidentiality, trust and appreciation of support.

This is similar to Aubrey *et al.*'s perspective (2007, cited by Brock, 2014), who she believes that further learning qualifications are crucial in Early Years Education. Highly successful practitioners take on new opportunities and challenges, in their dynamic learning environment. They take strategic decisions in the classroom and promote professionalism in a safe and conducive manner.

However, Brock (2014) explains that professionalism is crucial for maintaining key relationships between other educators. It also promotes communication skills, independence and reflection-in-action in an interdisciplinary team. Powell (2005) highlights that professionalism allows practitioners to convey their own thoughts, feelings, and shared beliefs in a learning environment.

Vygotsky (1962, cited by Johnston *et al*, 2018) has proposed that social interactions are essential to maintaining professionalism in Early Years Education. Teachers must provide opportunities, whereby, children will grow cognitively and emotionally. Promoting languages and thoughts are two separate functions that alternatively co- exist together in early childhood development.

This notion that Early Years Practitioner must display greater confidence in their reflective process, was emphasised by Brookfield (2005). He highlights that professionals, lack sound judgement and critical thinking skills, in their learning environments. This is further exacerbated by power, which undermines the fundamental, innate teaching practices.

The 'four lenses' is a useful strategy for teachers, to deeply engage in classroom activities and learning-based interactions. It is a clear indication of progress in curriculum, and where students might be exposed to difficulties.

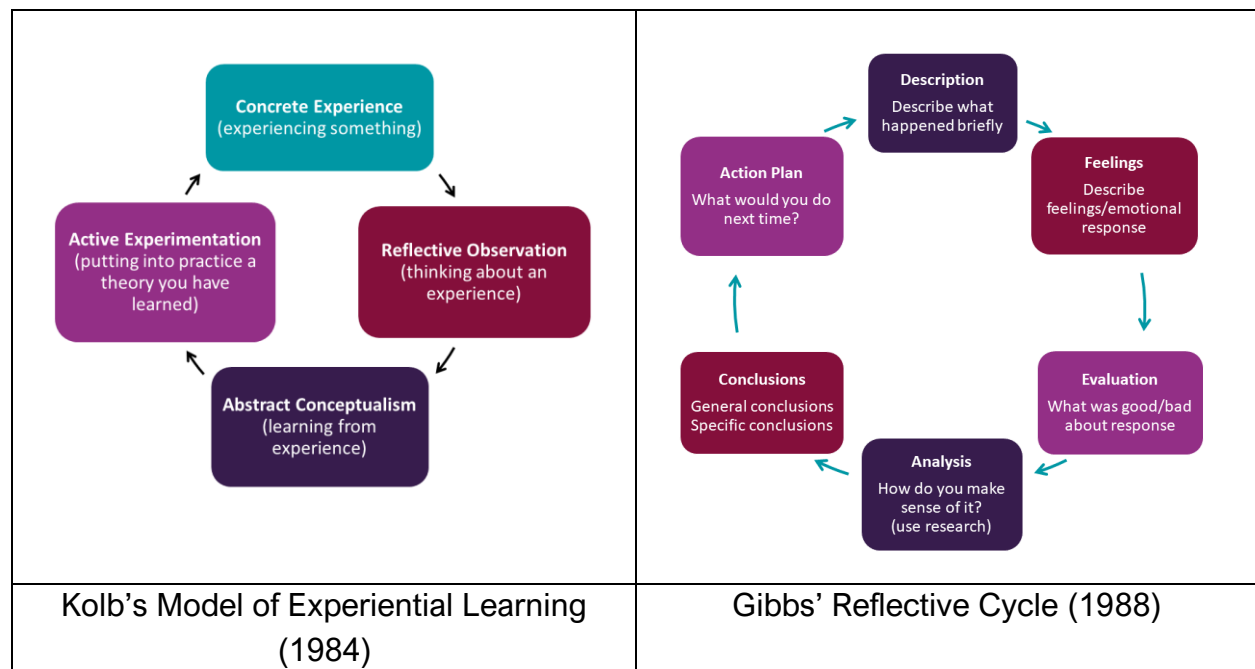
Lastly, Early Years Professionalism has undergone huge changes in the last few decades. Moss (2008, cited by Canning *et al*, 2011) pointed out that professionals must value confidence, research, and social dialogues with others. They must listen to other' people's opinions, and value-laden beliefs. In this way, practitioners would shift their own knowledge, from pedagogy to reflection-on-practice (McMillian, 2009).

4. Comparison of Reflective Practice Frameworks.

Arguably, one of the most fundamental theories of reflection is Kolb's Model of Experiential Learning (1984, cited by the University of Hull, 2023). This four-stage

process effectively enables the practitioner to promote hand-on-learning experiences, in a competitive learning environment. Whilst using empirical-based evidence.

However, Gibb's Reflective Cycle (1988, cited by the University of Hull, 2023) advocates practitioners to question their thought processes in their learning curriculum and teaching space. It provides meaningful opportunities for high-quality decision making, in a learning-led environment. This makes teaching a self-continuous system.



In Kolb's theory (1984), practitioners are meant to draw and reflect upon their past experiences, whilst applying it to their new teaching strategies, and key practical theories. The set goals must display objectivity and feasibility, which promotes a life-long knowledge into practice.

However, in Gibbs' theory (1988), practitioners must analyse the set context of the situation, and convey their own thoughts and feelings. The evaluation is a great opportunity for practitioners to reflect upon areas of study improvement. Using evidence in your conclusion is sufficient to be receptive to change.

Opponents of Kolb's Theory (1984) argued that the four-step processes are too superficial, and it does not align with the "reality of thinking" (Dewey, 1933). It inadequately takes into consideration the practitioner's sub-cultural experiences. Similarly, Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988) is flawed, and it often undermines the professional's ability to engage in critical thinking. It decontextualises aspects of evaluation and analysis, resulting in less well-substantiated argument.

5. Conclusion

Early-Years Professionalism has undergone several transformations over the past decade. Teachers are equipped with new technologies, which are designed to, promote a conducive learning environment. They adapt their skills, qualities and knowledge, that are specifically tailored to students' requirements.

The reflective practitioner must always gain a wider perception of themselves and others. Teachers must use criticality, to analyse new learning policies that are implemented in schools. Using pedagogy and dialogue, will give professionals the opportunity to develop an inclusive academic setting.

Part 3: Written Essay

The term 'professionalism' has several connotations in Early Years Childhood (EYC). Simpson (2010, cited by Bleach, 2014) argues that ECCE practitioners were "socially constructed and determined" by policy makers and other disclosures. Whilst the other practitioners, were displayed as active and reflexive agents. They recognise the socio-cultural backgrounds of which professionals might be employed in.

Early-Years Professionals have a wide range of characteristics, such as being non-judgmental, and openly accepting the value-laden beliefs of others. They instill fundamental moral values in a classroom-led environment. They are adept at fully resolving conflicts arising from students and prospective parents, by using unconventional strategies (Schon, 2011, cited by Gasper, 2015).

In Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (1978), he suggests that practitioners must take on leadership, and self-independence in learning. Education itself is constantly evolving, and so teachers must embark on new challenges. They will be unafraid of changes and open to continuity in their own academic spheres. Thus, promoting new teaching practices and working partnerships.

This essay will focus upon the different aspects of professional practice, and the importance of meeting the inclusive needs of children.

One of the most fundamental aspects of Early-Years Professionalism is Quality of Leadership. From Campbell-Baar's perspective (2019), the responsibility of a practitioner is impacted from the initiatives proposed by: National Stakeholders, Government Departments, Early Years (EY) Services and Inspections, Child Protection Services and other public bodies.

This notion that the child is the centre of leadership and public policy was further emphasised by Hendrick (1997). He explains how this strategy might promote intervention and academic attainment amongst young learners. This is similar to Clarke's and Moss's theory (2011, cited by Campell-Barr, 2019), whereby the

emphasis on constructive communication is displayed to children. This promotes a reciprocal relationship between the students in a safe environment.

Another crucial aspect of Early-Years Professionalism is promoting inclusion and diversity in a learning environment. According to Hull (1976, cited by Devarakonda, 2012), culture can be compared to an iceberg. On the tip of the iceberg, is where humans experience the tangible aspects of our self-identity. The hidden surface of the iceberg is representative of our morals, beliefs and set principles. It shapes the way other cultures might perceive the world around us.

In the 'five dimensions of multicultural education,' Banks (2004) suggests how practitioners might promote diversity and equality, in the foundation years curriculum. 'Prejudice reduction' focuses on the role that staff play in reducing racial stereotypes and fostering democratic responsibility. 'Equity pedagogy' refers to the responsibility of a teacher, in providing robust and comprehensive learning material for its students with diverse backgrounds.

Central to Early-Years Professionalism is social relationships and communication skills. Kalz and McClellan (1997, cited by McMahon, 2018) demonstrates that children who do not meet social competencies below the age of six and a half, are at a huge risk of "poor outcomes for the rest of their lives." For children with language barriers, it is difficult to engage in interactions with other peers.

Piaget (1932, cited by McMahon, 2018) argued that children are exposed to different independent learning styles from a young age, through their social surroundings. They use their past experiences, experimentation skills and repetition to build upon the foundations of their knowledge and to construct the set information meaningfully. For Piaget, the acquisition of language was a natural process, deeply ingrained in our minds, and "linked to prescribed stages of maturation."

Similarly, Hohmann and Wiekart (1995, cited by Siraj-Blatchford, 2022) drew upon aspects of Piaget's work, and emphasised upon the importance of social interactions and self-responsibility for learning curriculum. They argued that practitioners must

devise and present opportunities, in which the learner will be equipped with the set knowledge, and qualities required for their future job employment.

However, some scholars hold the perception that child development occurs through maintaining social dialogues with others. Holland and Lave (2001, cited by Popova, 2019) believed that this type of multi-faced communication is enacted through the environment in which the child is placed in. With a focus on multi-linguistic reality. This gives children an opportunity to adapt to the moral values, beliefs, set behaviour and socio-cultural climate of the new situation (Vygotsky, 1986).

Safeguarding and in-depth knowledge are two crucial components in Early-Years Professionalism. The Social Services and Well-being Wales Act (2014), argues that safeguarding is a shared responsibility. Practitioners' have the duty to share and report data with other school leaders and staff, with regards to the holistic well-being of children. They must recognise signs of abuse, neglect and mistreatment and take actions to mitigate this issue.

Understanding the needs and wants of our children is crucial to ensuring that their rights and responsibilities are respected and highly promoted. The Early-Years Practitioner must offer child-centered practices, whereby the focus is on the development of each child, as a healthy, confident individual. This mechanism is delivered, in a way, that ultimately seeks to give children tailored support, but also instills a positive relationship between parents (DfE 2017, cited by McMahon, 2018).

The professional practitioner must engage in difficult conversations and take on knowledge to another level. According to Argyris (1985, cited by Ash, 2013), a great leader will combine both inquiry and advocacy skills, in their learning environment. This is aligned with Spark's (2002, cited by Ash, 2013) belief, that a leader must present ideas in front of the faculty members, and ask them to challenge their opinions. It will give practitioners a new sort of perspective on quality leadership skills.

Another fundamental aspect of Early-Years Professionalism is partnership and multi-agency working. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1979, cited by Campbell-

Barr, 2019) focuses upon the environmental factors that impacts the children's 'microsystem' and 'macrosystem.' The child's sense of identity and belonging is found in the earliest stages of human development. This promotes stability and vitality for practitioners, who can work with the child effectively.

The symbiotic relationship between the student and a practitioner was further emphasised by Pascal and Bertram (1997, cited by Siraj-Blatchford, 2002). They believed that the engaged child was always goals-oriented, and quite attentive to its activity. It was quite intrinsically motivated, to working hard in their tasks. For them, learning is not a social vacuum, and so instead it is the ability for the professional and the student to support and co-exist with one another.

However, Laureau (1987, cited by Wilson, 2016) highlights that there is a clear difference between the upbringing of a child's education, through its social and cultural capitals. For example, the middle-class parents were more successful in providing a robust education system for their child, than the lower-class parents. They have a greater ability to form social networks and mobility with others and the school itself.

Within the "New Curriculum for Wales" (2022) framework, the practitioner has a responsibility to promote the diverse cultural landscapes of Wales, but whilst establishing a sense of cynefin amongst learners. The curriculum is designed for students to develop as 'ethical, informed citizens,' who will freely exercise their own democratic responsibilities, in an ever-changing world. It supports the holistic development of children, from Early-Years Professionalism.

The professional practitioner must use observation when evaluating the progress of their students. According to Piaget (1932, cited by Siraj-Blatchford, 2002), this type of learning mechanism, encourages students to explore their own academic capabilities. They are widely exposed to their new learning environments. He also argues that children are 'triggered' by different social phenomena, which fuels creativity, prior knowledge, and high levels of engagement, in their personal interests.

From the Welsh Government's perspective (2022), observation helps Early-Years Practitioners identify what motivates and captivates young children. It gives an understanding of their levels of attachment, social engagements, communication skills, and set competencies. Effective observation gives practitioners the full opportunity to explore the reasoning behind children's fascinations, and its implications for future learning planning.

The practitioner should use observation skills throughout the "school day, indoors and outdoors, in solitary and collaborative play" (Welsh Government, 2022). These contexts will help identify new teaching practices, that might be promoted in the classroom-led environment. Using a dialogic approach will enable social interactions amongst students to be prioritised. Observation acts as a vehicle for successful future planning and developmental progress.

Lastly, the United Nations of the Convention Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has played an instrumental part in the development of Early Years Professionalism. Article 33 explicitly states how governments might use legislation and administrative policy to prevent the use of children from the production of illegal substances. Article 34 highlights the government's role in protecting young children from sexual exploitation, and any other unlawful practices.

Arguably, Wales was one of the first countries to adopt the UNCRC international policy on children's rights and responsibilities. It was also the first country in Britain to establish the Children's Commissioner of Wales. This was a huge shift, from the 1970s, when children faced endemic abuse and neglect from their families (Waterhouse, (2000), cited by Reed, 2015) in North Wales. They were vulnerable, and often or not; their opinions were unheard of or not listened to.

It is the practitioner's responsibility to ensure that children feel safe, supportive, and inclusive in their learning environments. Empowering students is crucial for maintaining a high-quality education system. Children should find plenty of

opportunity for play, leisure and cultural activities, and where possible, thrive academically, irrespective of their social backgrounds.

Overall, the role of a practitioner is one that is overwhelmingly difficult. New technological changes, other legislative policies, and leadership styles can directly impact the quality of classroom learning. Using communication, and in-depth knowledge skills, will effectively ensure that children are placed at the forefront of education, which is constantly changing in Wales.

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