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The Professional Practitioner Portfolio and Contents Page

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I can confirm I have not presented any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I can confirm I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work.

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1. Professional Development Plan

Development and goals What do I want to do or become?	Actions What do I have to do to get there?	Criteria How will I know I have achieved this?	Resources What resources will I need to access?	Obstacles What could potentially get in the way of achieving this?	Support What support do I have?	Review
To progress my career further by completing a PGCE course to be able to build experience in the classroom.	Firstly, I must complete an undergraduate degree to progress further on to a PGCE course. Then I must complete a maths GSCE or an equivalent qualification so that I am able to hit the criteria of a PGCE course.	By completing a year PGCE course and graduating with The University.	I will need access to online content such as Moodle, Microsoft software's such as Word and PowerPoint.	A year PGCE course requires a full year commitment to study. Financial commitments may hinder my ability to take that amount of time to commit to study. Other avenues will have to be researched.	I will have support from my family and support from the university on what next steps to take after graduating from a BA honours.	This can be reviewed once I have completed my undergraduate course in early years education and care. I can then asses my situation and see if this still aligns with my current goals in the future.
To continue to develop my understanding of the teaching strategies used for ASD children, specifically speech and language (Attention Autism).	I will have the opportunity to deliver an attention autism sessions in a class environment. Firstly, I will have to plan and prepare my session.	By reflecting on the sessions that I have planned, prepared and delivered with the class teacher.	The session is resource heavy. Each child requires a craft kit.	Depending on what is planned for the session there may be a lack of recourses throughout the school to be able deliver the session as planned.	I will have training and support from the class teacher to be able to provide an attention autism session.	This can be reviewed every 3 months to ensure I have a up to date understanding.
To learn more about parallel play.	I will conduct independent research on parallel play by researching articles, speaking to other professionals and observing children in the classroom setting.	I will know I have achieved this by reflecting on my work with my class teacher.	I will need access to books and online articles to be able to conduct my independent research.	Due to a busier schedule now that I have taken on new commitments, I will have to manage my time carefully to allow for time to conduct research.	I will have support from the class teacher.	This can also be reviewed every 3 months to ensure my understanding of parallel play is up to date.

On reflection I have already learnt valuable experience by working in the classroom with both mainstream and additional learning needs children. I am ready to progress my skills and development further by aligning my goals with teaching and specializing in additional learning needs.

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2. Briefing paper

Reflective Practice

Introduction

This paper will discuss what reflection and reflective practice is, why it is important to people who are in the Early Years education/care field and different theories on reflection and how they compare.

What is reflection and reflective practice?

Reflection and reflective practice are a way of learning through experience. As explained by Brock (201 p.3) reflection is about analysis and exploring different perspectives. There are two types of practices that can be used for reflection as explained by Smith (2011 p. 23). Reflection in action which is described as 'thinking on your feet' and reflection on action which is described as thinking after an event. According to Brock (2015 p.7) reflection and reflective practice are core values for professional practitioners and are promoted in a range of different disciplines. Fook (2022 p. 1) supports Brocks claims and explains that over decades reflective practice has been recognized as a vital part of good practice in several different fields. Reading theory to develop knowledge about reflective practice can help support understanding. Reading or seeing reflective practice, when modelled correctly are a useful way of gaining understanding and application. This can be particularly beneficial when modelled by a colleague.

Why is reflective practice important to Early years practitioners

Reflective practice helps practitioners develop critical understanding of their own professional practice and helps develop skills and knowledge to achieve the best possible outcomes for the children. It is part of a practitioner's role to reflect on what they do to ensure continuous learning for the children they work with. Smith (2008 p. 64) says that practitioners must provide experiences and support to enable them to support children's emotional wellbeing and helping them to discover themselves. According to Reed and Canning (2010 p. 13) one thing in common to all early year practitioners is the benefit from the opportunity to reflect and learn. Discussing and sharing ideas with other outside agencies and authorities creates levels of confidence in leading practitioners. Lindon (2016 p. 147) supports Reed and canning claims and suggests that if supportive teamwork in an early year's setting is well established then it can feel like a pleasant community to be involved in in which reflection and discussion can be shared.

The theory of reflective practice

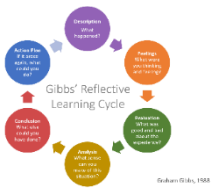
As discussed by Smith, Schon, (1991) identifies two types of reflection, reflection in practice and reflection on practice. This allows us to look at reflection before or after an event. In this instance both types of reflection will require building on previous learning and to link it to future practice. This theory is more beneficial to be applied when teaching. For example, reflection in action will require professionals to reflect in the moment as it happens in the classroom. Reflection on action requires professionals to reflect after teaching on a specific event. According to Lindon (2016 p.26) Schon was interested in the contradictions that could be observed within professional practice. Part of the contradiction was consistency, that there could be a noticeable gap between what is assumed to happen during daily practice and what happens.

There is another popular theory among reflective practice called the Gibbs theory. Gibbs theory is a reflective cycle that includes six stages. They include description of the experience, feelings and thoughts of the experience, evaluations which include good and bad, analysis, conclusion and action plan. Similarly to Schon's model on reflective practice Gibbs theory also requires the outline of the experience to be reflected on. The next step is to think about what was good or bad about it from our point of view. From this we can start to analyze the situation and try to break it down to make sense of it. The analysis will result in a conclusion which will consist of an action plan of what actions to take in the future.

Analysis of theories

According to The University of Edinburgh (2020) each stage of Gibbs model gives a fuller description with guiding questions to help practitioners to follow more easily, breaking down each step one by one. Interestingly Fallen. L (2023) supports this by saying the ridged structure serves some students well. However, he goes on to explain that Gibbs model confuses novices. So many students struggle to differentiate the evaluation and analysis. This can lead to mixed up sections. There are many with this same viewpoint there are many practitioners that find Gibbs Model more difficult to follow. For example, Timmins, F. *et al (2013)* says that Gibbs model of reflection may need further updating and modification for local use. She explains that the components of the model 'analysis', 'evaluation' and 'conclusion' can appear to overlap one another causing confusion for staff and students.

Schon Model of Reflection according to Workplace Hero (2023) one of the key benefits to Schons reflective model is that it can increase self-awareness. By turning their attention to past experiences practitioners can gain a deeper understanding of their strengths, weaknesses and values. This type of self-awareness allows individuals to make informed decisions about their career path and aspirations. Additionally, Schon model promotes continuous learning and development. However, this could also be argued for Gibbs's model if it is put into regular practice.



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Conclusion

To conclude, reflective practice is a significant part of early years practitioner's everyday practice. It can help individuals grow personally and professionally, by increasing self-awareness and emotional intelligence, develop a better understanding of others and enhance creative thinking skills. All of which can be applied to the workplace. Dellaportas, S. *et al.* (2023 p. 4) supports this point by saying one advantage of reflective learning is that it helps students to reflect on their personal values, enhancing self-awareness as well as awareness of different perspectives. By seeking continual improvement, you are modelling and promoting a growth mindset. There are many different models of reflection that individuals can follow. As discussed, some individuals find certain models of reflection more difficult to follow than others. Ultimately it is knowing which one works for you.

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3. Written Essay on the Significance of Professional Practice.

Professional Practice in Early Years Education and Care

This essay will be describing the significance of different aspects of professional practice and why they are important to meeting a child's individual needs. According to Perez (2018) professionalism is underpinned by values which guide the skills, knowledge and ethical standards required to execute a job role. The knowledge and skills practitioners can adopt are crucial to becoming a good professional practitioner.

It is generally considered today that professional values are widely acknowledged around the world in the early years setting. Arthur. J, Davidson. J and Kewis. M (2018 p.5) describe professional values as a set of beliefs that are considered positive and appropriate. Powell (2010 p. 215) believes that values in the early years setting are confidence, patience and professionalism, a sense of fun and a genuine interest in children and their development. These can be a mix of professional and personal values. Bamber. P (2019 p. 24) says professional values are significant for early years practitioners because they help provide us with a sense of direction and to help us make choices and decisions. Dobson. J (2020 p. 24) supports this claim by explaining how a compassionate approach helps practitioners to engage in everyday ethical dilemmas through allowing emotional states to help in challenging context. Dobson also says having compassion as a personal quality is crucial for working with children, communities and families. It opens possibilities for spontaneity, genuine reflexivity and consequently practice which is socially just sensitive and respectful.

Safeguarding is an essential part of professional practice within the early years setting. When safeguarding policies and procedures are carried out correctly it will protect children from potential harm and abuse and prevent harm to their health and development. According to NSPCC (2024) the first children's act was made in 1948. This set out new measures to support children across the UK. Under this act local authorities had a duty to provide care for children whose parents were not able to care

for them. In 1975 the children's According to Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2024) every person in contact or working with children at risk should be alert to indicators of abuse and neglect both within and outside the family. They should also be aware of who to contact in their organization to discuss concerns about children who are at risk and their duty to report. Baginsky, M (2022 p.62-63) points out that in the education setting most schools designated safeguarding officer were balancing their responsibilities between teaching and a wilder welfare remit. Her studies show that it was estimated that safeguarding/child protection took up to 15-100 per cent of designated safeguarding officer's time. Although this was said to vary on flexibility and support from work colleagues. She also explains that schools with a higher volume of safeguarding concerns, designated safeguarding officers are not required to teach or are given limited teaching responsibilities to dedicate more of their time to safeguarding concerns. According to the NSPPC (2024) teachers need to be alert and able to respond to the needs of children. They can only do this if they are physically and emotionally healthy. It is of the utmost importance that schools support staff, especially new teachers so that they can effectively safeguard children. All of this points to the conclusion that safeguarding comes under an umbrella of serious topics that all professional practitioners should be made aware of and to make a conscious effort to be able to identify to protect children against abuse and neglect. Studies have shown that safeguarding concerns are being prioritized by schools to ensure the safety of their pupils. However, Baginsky (2022 p. 147) argues that from her studies on working environments in school indicate that they do not feel they are provided with the right tools to do their job properly and are emotionally exhausted. Therefore, draw a conflicting opinion that teachers are not being supported enough in their job roles, leaving them emotionally exhausted and because of this will not be able to safeguard children effectively as an important part of their role.

An equally important aspect that links closely with safeguarding is the importance of multi-agency. It could be argued what this is the important aspect. The Children's workforce Development council (2008 p. 5) says that multi-agency workforces allow different services to join forces to prevent issues occurring in the first place. It is an

important way of supporting young children and their families. If concerns are raised in a school, for example, about a child that may be subject to abuse or violence. This will be documented by the school and if appropriate will be investigated by multi-agencies such as social services who both have a duty of care to safeguard children. However, there are a range of different reasons why multi-agencies workers may be required to work as part of a larger team. Walker. G (2021 p. 72) says that there are children who will require early intervention, these could be parents who are struggling to control their children's behavior, children with a learning difficulty such as autistic spectrum disorder or children who are directly affected by a bereavement. There are systems in place to help support these children and their parents. Once a problem or a concern has been identified multi-agency workers, who may include health visitors, teachers or early years staff, would then approach the parent(s) to offer a further assessment to fully understand the problem and to help address it.

Effective communication also plays a key role in professional practice. Most people will describe communication as talking or listening, but MTD Training and Ventus Publishing Aps (2010 p. 10) claims that communication goes beyond that. Communication involves getting information from one person to another. It is one of the fundamentals to good professional practice. Good communication will allow practitioners to build and maintain good working relationships with staff, carers and outer agencies. According to Burnham (2016 p. 23) part of an early year's practitioner's role is to ensure that partnerships with parents are an ongoing part of their work with children. She also explains that communication should be effective between home and school and that it provides mutual support for the child's early development. All channels of communication should be open and available so that parents deem that both staff and the setting are approachable. As mentioned previously, communication can also be described as listening. According to McMahon. S and Dyer. M (2018 p. 44) as a qualified practitioner you have the power to assist children in having a voice, part of this power is to be able to listen. It is of importance that you use this power wisely and effectively. Allowing children to have a voice will ultimately make them feel more comfortable communicating with the people that are responsible for them.

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Several key principles for early years practitioners can be found through the UNCRC (United Nations Convention of The Rights of The Child). According to the UNCRC (2022) it is an important and legally binding agreement signed by 196 around the world countries which outlines the fundamental rights of every child regardless of their race, religion and abilities. It consists of 54 articles that cover all aspects of a child's life. It cannot be denied that the UNCRC has a significant importance in early years practice. The articles included cover most aspects that has already been discussed previously. For example, article 19 states that

States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child. (UNCRC, 2022, p. 6).

The rights of the child are important to acknowledge when in practice as there are there to help protect and recognize that children are human beings within their own rights. It allows access to education and allows children to express their views and ideas. All of these will allow children to lead full and fulfilling lives.

As a final point the role of an early year professional practitioner is vital in ensuring that children's needs and developments are met and that we should always thrive to meet those needs at the highest standards. Without doing so children will not be placed in environments where they can become successful. The early years of a child's life and their development are crucial. Fundamental skills are gained in these years which can be built upon in adolescence and adult life. Hyson. M and Tomilson. H (2014) says that early year practitioners apply their knowledge and expertise in dynamic, fluid and often taxing environments to give children the best start in life and ensure the welfare and best interests of the children are kept at the centre decisions. As practitioners we can be heavily guided on our values and ethics, so it is important that we continue to reflect on values and knowledge throughout our practice.

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