

Cover sheet.

For this assessment I have used the following: -

Part 1: Personal Development Plan

Part 2:- Briefing Paper

Part 3: Written Essay

Statement for use of AI.

No use of AI.

Introduction.

My long-term goal is to build a successful career in early years education, with a focus on supporting children's holistic development and inclusion within the classroom. I am passionate about creating nurturing and stimulating environments where all children, including those with special educational needs (SEN), can thrive. This Personal Development Plan outlines the key steps I intend to take to achieve my academic and professional aspirations over the next few years.

No.	Goals	Objectives	Timeline	Success Criteria
1.	BA Degree in Early Years and Care	My first objective is to apply for and secure a place on a BA Degree in Early Years and Care. This course will provide me with a strong foundation in child development, safeguarding, curriculum planning, and inclusive practice. To achieve this, I will research a range of universities to identify one that best caters to my learning style and personal circumstances. I plan to attend open days, review course content on university websites, and contact lecturers for further details about module choices and placement opportunities.	By September 2025	I aim to receive an offer of acceptance, enrol on the course, and begin my university journey. The key indicators of success for this stage will be being offered a place and successfully enrolling in a suitable programme
2.	PGCE Primary / SEN Teacher	Upon completing my undergraduate degree, I intend to pursue a PGCE course specialising in Primary or SEN teaching. This qualification will allow me to gain Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and work as a fully qualified teacher. I will explore two possible routes: a university-based PGCE or a school-based training programme that allows me to gain experience while studying. To prepare, I will speak with my current placement provider about my future goals and enquire about potential support or sponsorship opportunities. Attending relevant open days and contacting local universities will also help me make an informed decision.	(September 2027)	My main outcome will be qualifying as a primary school teacher by 2028 and securing employment in a school setting where I can continue to develop professionally.
3.	Goal 3: Froebel-Based Learning	A key area of professional interest for me is Froebel-based learning, which emphasises play, creativity, and holistic development. I plan to research this approach in more depth, including its theoretical foundations and practical applications. Once I have a thorough understanding,	(Ongoing)	I aim to introduce Froebel principles into my current setting on a trial basis. If successful, I will share my findings with colleagues and work towards implementing this approach more widely across classrooms. This will demonstrate my initiative and ability to apply educational theory to practice

Conclusion.

This Personal Development Plan highlights the key stages of my academic and career progression. Through dedication, continuous reflection, and engagement with educational theory, I aim to become a skilled and compassionate teacher who promotes inclusive learning environments. Each milestone in this plan will bring me closer to fulfilling my ambition of making a meaningful difference in children's early education.

Part 2

What is reflection and reflective practise?

According to **University of Cambridge Study Skills (ND)** reflective practice originated within professions such as education, medicine, and social work as a structured approach to learning from real-world experience. Practitioners in these fields engaged in critical analysis of their interactions with students, patients, or clients to evaluate the effectiveness of their actions and to identify insights for future improvement. Over time, the principles of reflective practice have been adopted across a wide range of disciplines, including higher education. Within an academic context, reflection can be applied to activities such as preparing for group projects or developing assignments. Furthermore, reflective practice extends beyond academic study, serving as a valuable tool for professional development, job applications, and the ongoing evaluation of one's role and performance within the workplace.

Why is reflective practise important to EY practise?

Reflective practice is essential in the Early Years as it allows educators to critically evaluate their teaching methods and interactions with children. By reflecting on past activities, practitioners can identify effective strategies and adjust those that are less successful, ensuring that learning experiences are meaningful and developmentally appropriate. This process supports children's individual needs, enhancing cognitive, social, and emotional development. It also promotes professional growth by increasing self-awareness, improving decision-making, and encouraging the adoption of best practices. Additionally, reflective practice strengthens communication with parents and carers, ensuring consistency between home and educational settings. Ultimately, it contributes to high-quality learning environments where both children and practitioners benefit from continuous improvement.

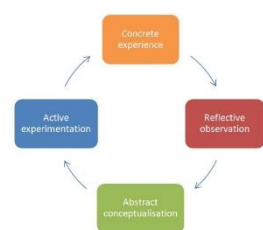
The theory of reflective practise:

John Dewey is widely recognised as the pioneer of reflection in the context of personal learning. He argued that reflection within a learning environment extends beyond the passive recollection of experiences; rather, it constitutes a deliberate, systematic, and active process of inquiry aimed at deepening understanding. **Dewey (1933, p.118)** defined reflection as "an active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and further conclusions to which it leads". **Dewey** maintained that reflection serves as a crucial mechanism for making sense of situations or experiences that are ambiguous or challenging to interpret. He proposed that reflective learning should involve recalling an event, critically examining the reasons underlying its outcomes, and considering alternative actions that might have produced different results. Building upon **Dewey's** foundational work, **Schön (1983)** further developed the concept of reflection by distinguishing between *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action*. *Reflection-in-action* occurs during the event itself, enabling practitioners to adapt their actions in real time, while *reflection-on-action* takes place after the event, allowing for critical evaluation and learning from experience. **Schön's** contribution positioned reflection as an essential component of professional practice, particularly within complex and unpredictable environments. Together, the theories of **Dewey and Schön** have significantly influenced contemporary models of reflective learning, many of which continue to explore the relationship between experience, analysis, and professional growth.

Gibbs' model



Kolb's model



Analysis of models

Both Gibbs' Reflective Cycle and Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle are widely used frameworks that support professional learning through reflection and experience. Gibbs' model provides a structured approach, guiding individuals through stages such as describing an experience, exploring feelings, evaluating outcomes, analysing causes, drawing conclusions, and creating an action plan for future improvement. This step-by-step process encourages self-awareness, critical thinking, and the identification of areas for personal and professional growth. However, it can be seen as somewhat rigid and time-consuming in fast-paced environments. Kolb's model, on the other hand, emphasises learning through direct experience, followed by reflection, conceptualisation, and experimentation. Its strength lies in promoting practical application and iterative learning, allowing individuals to test and refine their understanding in real-life situations. A limitation is that it assumes all learners progress through the stages in the same order, which may not suit everyone. Analysing both models highlights their value in supporting reflective practice, developing skills, and improving decision-making, while recognising that flexibility and adaptation are essential in professional contexts.

Both Gibbs' Reflective Cycle and Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle are widely used frameworks that support professional learning through reflection and experience, though each has distinct strengths and limitations. Gibbs' model provides a clear, step-by-step structure, guiding individuals to consider what happened, their feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusions, and future action. This structure promotes thorough reflection, self-awareness, and professional growth, and is particularly useful for documenting reflective practice. However, it can feel rigid, overly time-consuming, and focuses mainly on past experiences, which may limit forward-thinking innovation. In contrast, Kolb's model emphasises learning through direct experience, reflection, conceptualisation, and experimentation, making it highly practical and adaptable across contexts. Its limitations include assuming learners progress through stages in a fixed order and the reliance on having meaningful experiences to reflect upon. Analysing both models highlights their value in fostering reflective practice while acknowledging the need for flexibility in professional learning.

Conclusion

In conclusion, reflective practice is a fundamental component of professional development in Early Years education, enabling practitioners to critically evaluate their actions, adapt their approaches, and enhance learning outcomes for children. The theoretical foundations provided by Dewey and Schön emphasise both the deliberate analysis of past experiences and the capacity to respond dynamically in the moment. Models such as Gibbs' Reflective Cycle and Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle offer practical frameworks to guide this process, each with distinct advantages and limitations. By integrating reflective practice into everyday professional routines, educators can develop greater self-awareness, improve decision-making, and foster more effective teaching strategies. Ultimately, embracing reflection not only benefits practitioners' personal growth but also contributes to higher-quality educational experiences, ensuring that the needs and wellbeing of children remain at the centre of practice.

References- Part 2

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Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1988)

Kolb's Experimental Learning Cycle (1984)

Part 3:**Introduction – what is professional practise/ what is a professional?**

Professional practice encompasses the behaviours, ethical standards, and responsibilities expected of individuals within their professional roles. It involves not only the technical knowledge and skills required to perform tasks effectively but also the broader ethical and professional obligations that ensure practice is reflective, accountable, and principled. A professional is someone who applies specialised expertise responsibly while adhering to these standards. In education, professionalism extends beyond holding qualifications; it requires a commitment to ongoing professional development, critical self-reflection, and the continuous enhancement of pedagogical and interpersonal skills. Educators must prioritise the holistic development and wellbeing of their students, while fostering positive relationships with colleagues, families, and the wider school community. Professional practice in education is therefore a dynamic and reflective process, balancing technical competence with ethical responsibility, collaborative engagement, and a child-centred approach that promotes equitable and inclusive learning environments.

What values are important for a professional practitioner and why are values important to professional practise?

Schwartz, 2012; Day, (2018). Personal values are fundamental to the development of professional judgement in education, influencing teachers' ethical decision-making, behaviour, and interactions within the learning environment. These values operate as internal frameworks that shape professional conduct and guide responses to complex pedagogical and ethical situations

Brookfield, (2017) believes educators must engage in ongoing critical self-reflection to identify and evaluate their own value systems, recognising how these may consciously or unconsciously impact their practice and relationships with learners

Groundwater-Smith, Ewing and Le Cornu, (2020). States that it is equally important is the ability to recognise and respect the diverse values, cultures, and belief systems of others within the educational community, provided these do not cause harm or risk to learners. Effective educators maintain impartiality and inclusivity, ensuring that personal beliefs do not bias their teaching or professional relationships. Instead, diversity should be embraced as a valuable opportunity for professional growth and reflective inquiry, encouraging educators to consider how differing perspectives enrich their understanding of pedagogy, ethics, and classroom practice. Engaging in such reflection supports the development of culturally responsive, ethically grounded, and inclusive teaching practices that enhance both personal and professional integrity.

Why is communication and relationships important to professional practice and meeting the needs of children?

Effective communication and positive relationships are fundamental to professional practice in education, as they underpin children's learning, well-being, and holistic development. According to professional frameworks such as the **Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2011)** and the **Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2024)** emphasise the importance of fostering respectful, trusting, and collaborative relationships with children, families, and colleagues. These relationships support a safe, inclusive, and stimulating learning environment where every child can thrive.

Communication serves as a cornerstone of these relationships, enabling practitioners to understand and respond to the individual needs, interests, and experiences of children **Tassoni, (2019)**.

MacBlain,(2018) believes that through effective verbal and non-verbal communication, educators can promote a sense of belonging and emotional security, both of which are essential for positive learning outcomes.

Clear and empathetic communication also encourages children to express themselves, take risks in their learning, and develop key social and emotional skills that contribute to long-term well-being

Pianta, Hamre and Stuhlman, (2003).

Building positive relationships extends beyond interactions with children. Collaboration and communication with parents, carers, and other professionals ensure that educational provision is consistent and responsive to the child's wider context **(Arthur, Beecher and Death, 2018)**.

Groundwater-Smith, Ewing and Le Cornu,(2020) believes that partnership working reflects the holistic ethos promoted within UK education, recognising that effective teaching involves shared responsibility and mutual respect.

According to **Brookfield, (2017)** open communication among practitioners promotes reflective dialogue, professional development, and consistency in meeting children's needs.

In essence, effective communication and strong professional relationships are not only essential competencies for educators but also ethical imperatives embedded in UK professional standards.

They enable practitioners to meet children's developmental, emotional, and educational needs while upholding values of equality, inclusion, and respect. Through intentional communication and meaningful relationships, educators create learning environments where every child is supported to achieve their full potential.

Why is having an in-depth knowledge and understanding important to professional practice, including aspects of safeguarding?

All staff are required to complete safeguarding training to at least Level 2, ensuring they understand their responsibilities and know the appropriate channels to follow if any concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing arise. When collecting information, practitioners are instructed not to probe or make promises of confidentiality. All details must be accurately and promptly recorded to ensure that information can be shared with the relevant agencies without prejudice, supporting any necessary investigations or legal procedures. Practitioners have a clear duty of care to protect every child and are expected to follow all policies, procedures, and statutory requirements set out by their setting. Safeguarding is therefore a fundamental aspect of professional practice, underpinning ethical, safe, and effective provision. A thorough understanding and consistent application of safeguarding

procedures ensures that children's welfare is prioritised, risks are minimised, and the educational environment remains secure, supportive, and legally compliant.

Why is partnership and multi-agency working important to professional practice?

Building and sustaining effective relationships with key stakeholders in a child's life, including educational psychologists, specialist teachers, social workers, and other relevant professionals is crucial for promoting the holistic development, wellbeing, and educational progress of each child. Collaboration through structured approaches, such as person-centred meetings or team-around-the-child initiatives, enables practitioners to share best practices, exchange professional knowledge, and develop a deeper understanding of each pupil's individual needs. Clear and open communication ensures that concerns are identified and addressed promptly, allowing timely and appropriate interventions. Furthermore, multi-agency working supports professional growth, as practitioners gain access to new strategies, techniques, and theoretical perspectives from colleagues with specialised expertise. This collaborative approach ultimately enhances the quality, consistency, and effectiveness of the support provided to children, their families, and the wider educational community.

How does the observation and planning cycle inform professional practice and ensure practitioners are meeting the needs of children?

Observation is a vital component of understanding each child's developmental progress, interests, and preferred learning style. Through careful observation, practitioners are able to identify individual strengths, needs, and areas for support, allowing tasks and activities to be tailored effectively to promote engagement and progress, particularly within small class provisions. Planning that is informed by regular observation ensures that learning experiences are purposeful, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate. Furthermore, sharing observations and plans with all practitioners involved supports consistency of approach, enhances professional collaboration, and ensures that every child receives coherent and well-coordinated support across all aspects of their learning and development.

How do the principles of the UNCRC inform professional practice and why is this important?

The (UNCRC) outlines a set of rights designed to protect and support all children, regardless of their background. It provides a framework that guides how professionals working with children, such as teachers, social workers, and healthcare staff should approach their practice.

The UNCRC also encourages inclusive and equitable practice. Professionals must identify and remove barriers that stop some children from accessing the same opportunities as others. This might involve adapting teaching materials for children with additional learning needs or making sure services are accessible to children from different cultural backgrounds.

Another key aspect is supporting the child's overall development, not just their academic or physical growth, but their emotional and social wellbeing too. By adopting a holistic, rights-based approach, professionals can better meet the full range of children's needs.

Understanding and applying the principles of the UNCRC is important because it ensures that practice is ethical, fair, and consistent. It empowers children to have a voice and helps professionals build trusting relationships with them. It also ensures that children's rights are recognised as a core part of professional responsibility, leading to better outcomes for their welfare, safety, and development.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, professional practice within education is underpinned by a synthesis of knowledge, ethical awareness, and reflective judgement. A professional is characterised not only by their qualifications and technical competence but also by their commitment to ongoing learning, ethical integrity, and the promotion of children's wellbeing. Central to effective professional practice are the core values of respect, inclusivity, and fairness, which guide practitioners in making principled decisions and fostering equitable learning environments.

Effective communication and the establishment of positive, trusting relationships are fundamental to supporting children's holistic development. Collaboration with families, colleagues, and external agencies enhances professional understanding and ensures that practice remains responsive to the diverse needs of learners. Similarly, a robust understanding of safeguarding policies and procedures reinforces a culture of protection and accountability, ensuring that every child's welfare remains paramount.

Observation and planning processes further strengthen professional practice by enabling practitioners to deliver purposeful, individualised learning experiences. Moreover, the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) provide a critical ethical framework that foregrounds children's rights, voices, and best interests within all aspects of professional decision-making.

Ultimately, professional practice in education is a dynamic, reflective, and values-driven endeavour. It requires practitioners to integrate knowledge, ethics, and empathy in order to uphold professional standards and create inclusive, empowering environments where every child is supported to reach their full potential.

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Current setting (2025)