

The importance of reflective practice as a professional practitioner.

What is Reflection and Reflective Practice.

The Health and Care Professions Council (2021) says that by critically analysing any aspect of your professional practise, reflection is a technique that aids in gaining understanding into it. The information acquired and the lessons discovered can be applied to maintain best practises and promote advancements and improvements for both the professional and the children in their settings. Various people learn in different ways, Therefore, whereas one individual could find it more helpful to focus on a situation that they found challenging, another person would find it more useful to reflect on a successful outcome. To maximise the benefits of reflection, it's important to use a technique that suits your needs. Reflective practise enables childcare providers to gain a critical understanding of their own practise and continuously enhance the abilities, understanding, and methods required to provide the greatest results for children. Pacey (2016) agrees and says that reflecting on one's practise is a great approach to uphold and continuously enhance the quality of your work as a childcare and early years professional who wants to give children the best care possible. Bruce (2011) argues that an informed practitioner will be able to recognise and value a child's strengths, pinpoint the areas that require future growth, and set priorities for action to advance their practice. This will demonstrate an awareness of how children think and learn. The idea of the reflective practitioner emphasised the importance of practitioners taking stock of what has occurred, determining what went well and what can be improved to guide future planning and practice. This is referred to as action on reflection. Schon (2011). The essence of practise is a series of episodes involving problem solving. Using that as a starting point, (Schon 2011) then demonstrates how practitioners resolve issues. They may use their theory, but their goal is to find a solution to the issue at hand. This is called reflection in action.

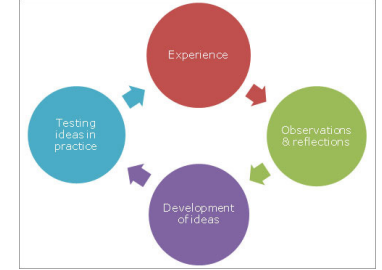
Reflection within professional practice.

In order to ensure that you are learning and getting better as a professional practitioner, you must be able to reflect on your own work. You can better understand your students' learning styles and hold yourself accountable for their development by reflecting on your own teaching. You will gain knowledge of the elements that influence and obstruct learning by evaluating the positive and negative aspects of your own teaching. When one is able to reflect on their knowledge, they can grow via experience. (Cambridge Assessment International Education, no date). In order to improve teaching, reflection must be engaged in professional practise daily. Reflection must be meaningful in order to be effective, therefore for a professional practitioner it must be relevant to their job in the early years. (Brock, 2014) Professional growth is crucial since it fosters knowledge and comprehension of the task. It offers caregivers the chance to hone their existing abilities and learn new ones. The ability to try out new scenarios and get ready for new tasks and responsibilities is provided by reflecting on practice. (WJEC, 2019). By critically analysing any aspect of your professional practise, reflection is a technique that aids in gaining understanding into it. The knowledge gained and the lessons learned can be used to uphold best practices while also fostering advancements and improvements for both the professional and the children they work with. As a professional, knowing how to improve oneself and when to do so is a critical ability, and classes and training will aid in the professional's development.

When reflecting, a range of different models might be applied. While they are all unique, they all have comparable stages, some with more than others.



Graham Gibbs created the Gibbs Reflective Cycle in 1988 to organise learning from experiences. It provides a framework for analysing events and given that it is cyclical, it lends itself particularly well to situations, allowing you to learn from both positive and negative circumstances and make strategies as a result. The University of Edinburgh () says that the Gibb's Reflective Cycle is one of the most well-known cycles of reflection guides you through six stages as you examine an experience: description, feelings, assessment, analysis, conclusion, and action plan. This model is useful for analysing an event. This could be a singular occurrence or something you encounter repeatedly. Although Gibbs initially recommended using it in repetitive situations, the stages and principles also hold true for one-time events. Gibbs has provided a number of questions for each step. Although not all questions must be answered, they are there to guide.



In 1984, David Kolb released his model of learning styles. The four-stage learning cycle and the four different learning styles are both components of Kolb's experiential learning theory. Kolb's theory gives internal cognitive processes of the learner a lot of attention. A four-stage learning cycle that ensuring the student takes part in all is how Kolb's experiential learning style theory is often represented. Effective learning occurs when a person moves through a cycle of four stages: (1) having a concrete experience, (2) observing that experience and reflecting on it, (3) forming abstract concepts (analysis) and generalisations (conclusions), and (4) using those concepts to test a hypothesis in new situations, leading to new experiences.

“Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. However, learning only happens effectively when a learner can carry out each of the model's four steps. Thus, not one stage of the cycle can serve as a learning process all by itself. Reflective observation is emphasised in the learning cycle as a technique to evaluate and derive meaning from an event. The goal is to apply this knowledge to fresh encounters, completing the cycle. (Mcloed, 2017)



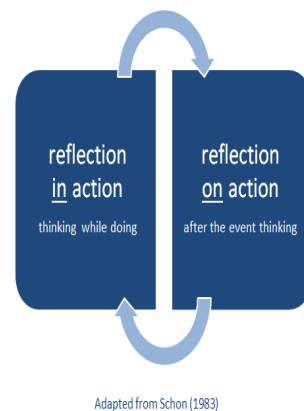
The Driscoll model of reflection is among the simplest models you may come across. Driscoll created it in 1994, 2004, and 2007. (NursingAnswers.net, 2018) Driscoll focused on the three root questions. The questions being What, So what? And now what? By answering these three questions, you can start to analyse experiences and learn from them. It's imperative to begin by explaining the situation or incident. The setting is crucial. This gives the user a more thorough understanding of what is happening. This is accomplished simply asking yourself, "What?" What can be inferred about the experience? The final stage challenges the user to consider the course of action that followed the introspection. Should our behaviour change? Is it necessary to present a new idea? Or is the current situation productive enough that no modifications are required?

Although Driscoll's model of reflection is not the most popular, it offers several benefits, largely because of how straightforward it is. When compared to other models, the three-stage approach is simpler and easier to recall. It is more probable that you will use a tool or framework more frequently if it is simple to use.

Donald Schon says that "Reflective practice is the ability to reflect on one's actions so as to engage in a process of continuous learning. By distinguishing between reflection during the event and reflection after the event, Schön's (1991) Reflection in action/Reflection on action adds another component. Considering this distinction during your own reflective practise might be beneficial.

This is especially helpful in real-world scenarios like teaching or in early years. When something isn't going as you had hoped, you might need to be adaptable and attempt different strategies. You can understand the components of reflective practice. by using Schön's framework. Schon proposed that the ability for reflect on action is an essential aspect of professional activity and a requirement for participating in a process of continual learning. Schon proposes that via "reflecting-in-action," professionals reflect on unexpected experiences and perform "experiments" that help to both develop a new understanding of the experience and a change in the situation. It is typically connected to the feeling of surprise.

Practitioners should be able to reflect on learning while in learning so should be able to think about what they are doing it while doing it. (NursingAnswers.net, 2018). The University of Hull (2022) says the advantage of this approach is that it contrasts reflections that take place at the time of an event or experience with those that take place subsequently (after the event).



Adapted from Schon (1983)

Why is reflective practice important in the early years.

When children receive high-quality early learning experiences, a study of early childhood care and education in 20 nations indicated that gains in children's long-term outcomes are possible for all children. (OECD 2006) High quality early childhood education and care settings should include reflective practise and critically reflective practise should be a fundamental component. Early childhood professionals can create a critical understanding of their own practice through self-reflective practice, they can enhance their knowledge abilities, and methods to provide the best results for children. According to study, educators who continually reflect on what they do, why they do it, and how this new information may be utilised to better their job, produce the best results for children and families. (MacNaughton, 2003) (TeachKloud, 2019) explains the various ways in which contemplation can enhance practice. A practitioner can recognise and value positive experiences through reflection and can more easily identify areas to enhance practice and improve children experiences. Additionally, it can be helpful in processing and learning from more difficult events, which can be beneficial. By reflecting on their work, practitioners can discover potential learning obstacles that certain students may face and come up with solutions by using research to back up their theories. It forces you to pause, consider your actions, and then take them. Practitioners discover fresh approaches to promote children's development through this process of reflection. Reflection is a powerful tool for problem-solving. Practitioners become more adaptable in their approach, which assists children at their age and stage of development, by challenging technique or long-held assumptions with the goal of implementing adjustments based on your results. The opportunity for self-evaluation as well as appreciation of children's talents and accomplishments is provided by reflective practise. It is an excellent opportunity to recognise children's accomplishments and celebrate them rather than just focusing on what might have gone wrong or already has.

Conclusion.

Farelly, P. et al. 2010) says many professionals offer very young children excellent care and learning environments because they have years of real-world experience working with small children. Being a professional practitioner means one can challenge and improve practice in childcare settings by using reflection. Practitioners already approach their work with a professional mindset, valuing and respecting the children, parents, staff, and other professionals they may engage with. Making improvements is essential for both personal and professional growth. You can determine where to best concentrate your efforts by becoming more self-aware and understanding who you are. Enhancing the calibre of your practice is one of the key goals of reflection.