

The Professional Practitioner

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What do I know already: Children have different individual learning needs which may impact their ability to learn.				
What have I learnt so far: Lessons need to be adapted accordingly to individual need and ability to achieve the best outcome for the child.				
What do I want to develop: How emotional barriers can affect learning and what strategies I can use to further support children in their education.				
Objective	Actions (How will I achieve this objective/ what needs to be done?)	Resources (What support and resources are needed to achieve this objective?)	Target Date for achieving objective	Success criteria (How will I know I have achieved this goal, how will I review this?)
To understand what causes challenging behaviour and how to manage behaviour effectively	Team Teach Course Develop knowledge of ACEs and the impact they can have on learning	Observing other teachers to learn from others Teachers observing me to give feedback and improve reflection Being consistent with clear expectations Consistent routines Building positive relationships – knowing pupils as individuals getting to know their likes/dislikes Model desired behaviours Positive reinforcement by acknowledging the behaviours I want to see Create a calming and safe environment Communication with parents	April 2025	I will be able to identify the factors contributing to behaviour. These can include, social and emotional factors, learning difficulties, boredom, peer pressure and so on. I will then be able to set individual targets. Pupils will be more engaged in my lessons meaning they will learn more and achieve a higher outcome. Behaviours won't be getting repeated. I will feel more confident in my teaching and less likely to feel stress or anxious. I will regularly reflect on how my lessons went and what could be better next time. Attend refresher courses to

				keep training and knowledge up to date.
To be able to respond to any accidents/ incidents	First Aid Training	Take full and active part in the training Actively listening to the training provider Watching videos online – British Red Cross Following school's health and safety policy	February 2025	I will receive a certificate upon completing the training. Having this training will mean I am confidently able to respond to any accidents or incidents that occur in school. I will be able to respond quickly ensuring there are minimal injuries and illnesses are prevented from getting worse. Being a qualified first aider will help me to maintain the safety and wellbeing of pupils in my care. I will carry out a refresher course after 3 years to ensure my training and knowledge is kept up to date.
To provide emotional further emotional support	ELSA Course	Create a timetable for interventions Communication with parents and staff Have a caring and empathetic approach Building positive relationships Creating a safe environment for the interventions to take place	October 2025	I will know ELSA interventions have been successful when a pupil has met the SMART targets I have set for them. They will understand their emotions and develop coping strategies to be able to self-regulate with less of a need to rely on staff. They will

		Create a sensory area Use of resources – finger puppets, visual aids Support of your SENCo Regular supervision from educational psychologist		have improved self-esteem and feel happier in school. As a result of this attendance is likely to improve and pupils will engagement in lessons will increase.
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What is reflection and reflective practise?

Reflection is the process of taking an experience and asking yourself questions such as what went well and what could be better next time. Reflective practice is a key part of development for childcare practitioners to improve personal and professional development. (Craft and Paige-Smith, 2011, p.15) This is supported by Brock (2015) who highlights professionals uphold core values which include reflection and reflective practice both of which have a key role in professional training. Reflecting on practice in early years will enable the practitioner to discover new ways to support the development of children. This will be achieved by the practitioner identifying where mistakes have been made, processing this and then making changes which will improve practice. This will result in developing a strong and fully inclusive pedagogy.

Why is reflective practise important to EY practise?

Reflective practice will enhance the learning of children in your care. Children are constantly developing and their needs changing. It is important that we take risks to develop and challenge children. Through observing and reflecting practitioners learn and follow the interests of the children, resulting in maintaining a child centred approach. (Lindon 2016) The more children enjoy, the more they are going to learn. It is essential to get to know their individual likes and their dislikes, this can then be used in planning. If children dislike something they are less likely to engage, and this has a negative impact on development. Reflecting will also allow practitioners to identify any further learning needs. This is vital to ensure inclusive practice as you can adapt accordingly to the individual needs. Regularly reflecting will enable you to see the positive outcome your actions are having on the children in your care which will improve your confidence and values as a practitioner.

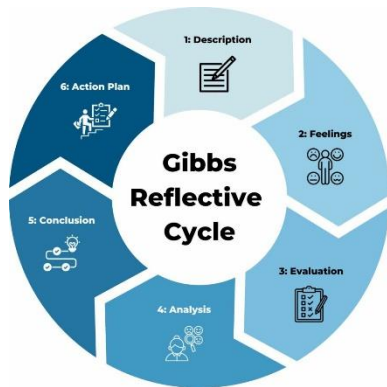
The theory of reflective practise:

Reflective practice is shaped by the work of Schon and Dewey.

Schon (1991) believes there are two types of reflection. The first one is reflection in action which refers to thinking while doing. This means you are thinking in the moment while you are teaching and adapting based on your previous experiences of teaching. You can recognise that you have been in a similar experience, and you are thinking about how you can change it this time. You act and make changes immediately. The second is reflection on action. This is where you reflect after an experience has happened and you reconsider what needs changing for the future. In practice this could be reflecting on an activity you have carried out and considering if all the children engaged, if they did not what could make them more engaged next time. Both reflection techniques enable professionals to make sense of what you do and think in day-to-day practice and allow for continuous learning. (Schon 2016)

Dewey (1933) defined reflective thought as 'active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends'. Dewey believes that you must take an active approach by looking back at what you have done and think to learn and move forward. These experiences shape us personally and professionally as practitioners. Dewey identified two types of action. The first one is routine action and the second is reflective action. Routine action is something that takes place because it has always been done that way and any problems that arise get solved in the moment. Reflective action refers to quick thinking and questioning everything, considering how and why things are how they are.

Gibbs' model

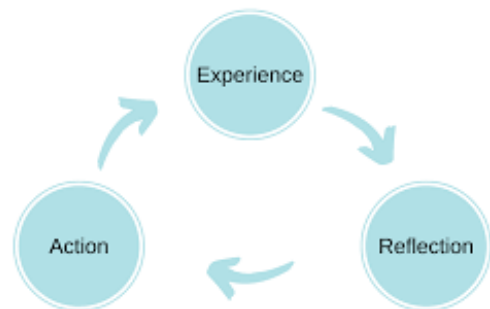


(TSW 1998)

Gibbs' model of reflection includes six parts of your learning cycle:

- Description – For a practitioner this could be describing what happened in an activity that you have planned.
- Feelings – What are your feelings during the activity and after. How did the children feel.
- Evaluation – What was good it and bad about the carrying out the activity.
- Analysis – To help make sense of the experience for you and the children.
- Conclusion – What have you learnt and what could you do differently next time to make it better.
- Action plan – How will you deal with the experience next time and what changes you might make, can you change resources to enhance it.

ERA's model



(Jasper 2013)

The ERA model of reflection has only three stages and is based around building understanding from experience:

- Experience – What was the experience, what aspects were involved, how did other staff/children react.
- Reflection – What did you feel. Did you respond or react to behaviours of the children. What can you learn. If things went well, what are the reasons they went well.
- Action – What you would do if it happened again. Would you be able to recognise that you are in the same situation again.

Analysis of models – compare/contrast/pros/cons:

Using models for reflection can help a practitioner to understand and learn from their practice. Models may not apply to every situation it is important to consider the strengths and weaknesses and ensure the model is suited to the individual. Gibbs model has a focus on feelings which allows for a more personal reflection. Gibbs model has a lot of steps which could be time consuming compared to ERA's three steps. It would take half the time to use ERAs model of reflection compared to Gibbs. Gibbs model has more structure which is likely to provide you with in depth information however it contains two steps that are quite similar, evaluation and analysis. This could result in you repeating yourself during the process of reflection. Although ERAs cycle has less structure, it is simple to follow. Practitioners may find this model a shorter but effective way to reflect.

Conclusion

Birth To 5 matters (2021) highlights the importance of reflection for practitioners to self-improve and develop. By using reflective practice practitioners will develop a critical understanding of their own practice which will result in thoughtful planning. This will enable practitioners to further develop the necessary skills, knowledge and approaches to achieve the best development, learning and progress for the children in your care. It will also help to increase personal key skills such as confidence, decision making and communications skills. Making changes and trying new things will show that you are being proactive, overall improving the quality of care and education you provide to children and their families. The better understanding you have of your own learning and thinking, you will also understand the learning and thinking of children in your care enhancing the well-being of children.

The Role of the Professional Practitioner

Early years practitioners provide a safe and stimulating environment where children are encouraged to develop and learn. Practitioners provide nurture and care ensuring the individual needs of care and development are constantly being met. Children need to feel they are in a welcoming and safe environment where they can make choices and have the freedom to learn independently. Children are influenced by the environment and the adults around them therefore practitioners must act as positive role models and promote the behaviours they want children to follow. Important key skills include being kind, caring, patient and empathetic to allow trusting relationships with children to form. Practitioners develop problem solving and can think quickly and creatively. Practitioners have core values that guide decision making and influence their role as an educator.

Inclusive practice is integral to make children feel they belong and are valued. Being inclusive within a setting celebrates all children regardless of culture, abilities, or learning needs and ensures every child can thrive. Being inclusive is listening to every single child and their families. Children have their own feelings about their lives which they should be encouraged to express as outlined by article 12 of UNCRC. When planning activities practitioners are responsible for ensuring they are equally available to each child based on their individual needs and that they reflect the diversity of all the children. Birth to 5 matters (2021) highlights that practitioners have the responsibility to uphold the Equality Act 2010 which outlines that no child or family is to be discriminated against in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership.

Communication plays a vital part in the role of a practitioner. To provide the best outcome for the child, practitioners need to collaborate effectively with families, staff and multi agencies. This is supported by Dunhill (2009) who explains good communication is achieved through a practitioner listening, questioning, understanding and responding to what is being communicated by children and their families/carers. Communicating effectively is achieved by giving your full attention with eye contact, using a gently tone and positive body language. Practitioners must remain sensitive to different cultures and any barriers to communication. If children/parents speak a different language to you or have hearing/visual impairments, the role of the practitioner is to find ways to overcome these barriers. This can be achieved by using a multi-sensory approach using visual aids alongside verbal language. It is essential that parents are made to feel they are involved in their children's learning. Information is shared between both parents and practitioners regularly through conversation, emails, phone calls and photographs. Many childcare settings also use digital platforms including 'Family app' where information can be shared quickly and easily. Parents can view their child's progress and daily activity. This allows parents to feel fully engaged with their child's learning and development.

Working in partnership with parents/carers and outside agencies is central to providing the best outcome for the child. Children may require additional support

from services or benefit from receiving interventions. To have a positive impact it is essential for a practitioner to build positive relationships with the child, their families, colleagues and external agencies. Building trust between parents and practitioners and working together is essential. It is important to listen to families wishes but also important the voice of the child remains and the centre of all decision making. Multi-agencies are there to further support children in more depth and provide additional support where needed. Multi-agency working is crucial for children to receive effective safeguarding and child protection. (Sidebotham et al, 2016) By sharing information professionals can then collaborate to gain full understanding of a child's needs and risks they may be exposed to.

In depth knowledge and understanding are integral for the professional practitioner to ensure the seven areas of learning outlined by the EYFS are being promoted. Every child within a setting has individual needs, the role of the practitioner is to identify these needs and ensure they are met in every aspect. Knowing the children individually will allow for personal development goals through assessing, recording, planning and observing. More knowledge will enhance the learning of the child through creating learning opportunities. Practitioners promote the voice of the child by providing child led activities offering the child freedom to make their own choices. The world around is continuously changing, it is the responsibility of the practitioner to keep up to date with training ensuring knowledge remains up to date and relevant. The more knowledge you gain, the more confidence a practitioner will develop. Following safeguarding policies and procedure within your setting is integral to keep children and staff safe. It is the responsibility of the practitioner to carry out risk assessments which follow policies and procedures of food hygiene, first aid, fire safety and child protection.

Observation is a key role for practitioners which allows for effective planning and assessing. Observing will show you the child's individual strengths, weaknesses and interests allowing practitioners to gain understanding of each child. Johnston (2018) explains that observation is more than just looking. It requires practitioners to watch children closely, listen, discuss with colleagues, question what this tells them about the child and to analyse their work. Through observing practitioners determine if children are developing and progressing appropriately across the areas of learning or whether there are signs of development delays. A successful method of achieving this is to use the observation cycle which allows practitioners to gain insight into what influences children. Observation is also a fundamental part of safeguarding children as practitioners will be aware of any behaviour changes or appearances. Keeping a record of these enables a practitioner to see if there is any pattern and whether there is a cause for concern which needs action.

Every childcare practitioner has a role of safeguarding children. Effective safeguarding is where children are protected from harm and their welfare promoted. Harm is defined as the result of a direct act or by failure to act to provide care or both. (Great Britain, Department of Health 1999) It is the responsibility of practitioners to know each child and be able to quickly identify any concerns that include emotional, physical or sexual abuse and neglect. Practitioners provide support for any children identified as needing child protection. Every setting has a safeguarding policy and procedure for practitioners to adhere to. If necessary, the concern is then shared with Children's social services. Practitioners must record any

concern and pass it on the designated safeguarding officer to be dealt with immediately. The Welsh Government outlines that practitioners must maintain a children's rights approach and always follow the National Principal Standards.

The UNCRC is a legally binding agreement which is embedded into childcare settings. The UNCRC is made up of 54 articles covering all aspects of a child's life and protecting the human rights of all children under the age of 18. The aim is to ensure children grow up in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity. It is the role of practitioners to understand these rights and promote them in their everyday practice. Unicef (2016) outlines that following these articles protects and promotes the best interests of every child regardless of race, religion or ability. Article 3 of the UNCRC is one of the core values for practitioners stating that the best interests of children should be the primary consideration in all decision making. To support children effectively a practitioner must have the child's best interests in focus and this value must remain at the core of all practice.

The aspects I have discussed in this essay all contribute to the makings of a professional practitioner, one who provides high standard of learning, development and care in accordance with the EYFS. Practitioners provide a wide range of fun and inclusive indoor and outdoor activities striking a balance between child initiated and adult led. Practitioners understand that children need to have learning opportunities that are specific to their needs and interests. By encouraging curiosity and promoting child centred learning children become confident, inquisitive and independent learners. (Early Years Careers 2024) Practitioners are committed to providing an environment that keeps children healthy and safe working effectively alongside colleagues, parents/carers and external agencies. Practitioners are dedicated to having a child centred approach and always being a voice for the children in their care.

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Appendix

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I have not used AI in this document.