

## Element 4: Professional Practice

### Activity C: Reflective Practice

One of the key skills required of a practitioner in early childhood is the ability to critically reflect on his/her own practice. Intentional reflection on daily experiences with children and families supports practitioners to continuously refine their practice and in doing so, improve outcomes for babies, toddlers, and young children's learning and development.

To reflect, practitioners require space and time to pay critical attention to the motivation behind their actions – the thoughts, emotions, principles, values, ethics and theories which inform their everyday work. This opportunity to reflect helps practitioners to understand **what** they do, **why** they do it, and **how** they do it. Reflective practice increases their self-awareness and helps them become more intentional in their role in supporting holistic learning and development. It might highlight areas where they work really well, as well as highlighting areas that would benefit from change, for example, how they work with a child who has attention difficulties, or it might spotlight where additional knowledge or professional development would be helpful.

The process of reflection can take many forms including thinking or talking about practice alone or with others. It might include reviewing documentation like observations, photographs, videos, voice recordings or looking at and thinking about children's journals or curriculum portfolios. Reflection can also come about in response to new legislation, regulation or by visiting another setting. Further training or attending a continuing professional development event like a conference or network meeting might also prompt reflection.

Reflective practice is an on-going process which becomes an integral part of the daily routine.

Reflection is often referred to in two ways:

- 1 **Reflecting 'in' action**, thinking 'on your feet' as you work with children.
- 2 **Reflecting 'on' action**, thinking after the event as you look back on it.

Activities in this part of the Practice Guide focus mainly on **reflecting 'on' action**. Activity C will help you to reflect and identify what motivates and influences your current practice.

To begin, choose a daily experience or interaction that you are regularly involved in, for example, greeting-time, snack-time, a care-giving routine, joining children in their play or the transition from one activity to the next. Focusing on this, work through the questions below to critically evaluate your role in supporting the children's learning and development—what you did.

## Reflecting On Action

1. **Name the activity, interaction or daily experience and provide a brief description of your role in it.**

2. **Why do you carry out your role in this way?**

3. **What are the advantages of doing things this way? (Think about benefits for you, the child/children, the team, the manager and parents.)**

4. **What are the disadvantages of doing things this way? (Again, think about the practitioner, the child/children, the team, the manager and parents.)**

5. **Is there another way you could fulfil the role you have in order to enhance the experience for children? What benefits would this have?**