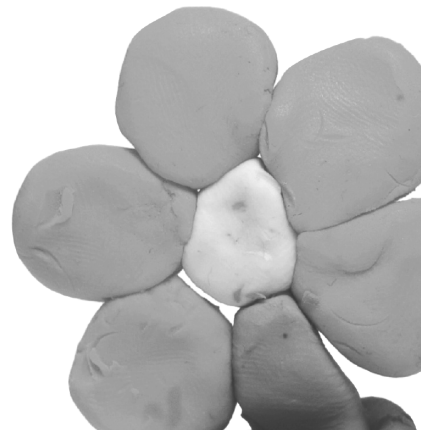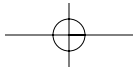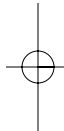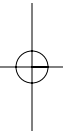# Section 1

Children's Learning and Development

1

Reflective Thinking;
Reflective Practice

Karen Appleby

Chapter objectives

This chapter examines reflective thinking and practice from the perspective of developing early childhood professionals who are active participants in the process of exploring and developing their own 'professional identity' and expertise as reflective practitioners. Key themes are that this process should be personally meaningful and purposeful; that it involves practitioners developing not only key values, qualities knowledge and skills, but that it also requires the ability to articulate and represent these for themselves and for others. The examination and sharing of personal learning journeys is seen as being central to our developing understanding of 'who we are' as reflective practitioners and supporting our understanding of others. It reinforces the notion that the journey will continue. The term 'reflective practitioner' here, is applied to all early child professionals, regardless of their role and is not perceived as being limited solely to those working directly with young children. As a lecturer in Early Childhood I see myself as a member of this group; consequently this chapter represents my personal interpretation of the role at the time of writing, constructed through my own experiences, the 'voices' and pictures of practice of students and colleagues in relation to wider reading.

📁 A picture of practice: setting the scene

Current policy on workforce development embraces the principle that reflective practice is an essential tool within the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* agenda. Bertram and Owen (2007: online) describe quality settings as being 'characterised by staff who are reflective, committed and seeking to 'improve on their previous best'. The *Common Core of Skills and Knowledge* (DfES, 2005), The *Early Years Foundation Stage* (DCSF, 2008) and *Standards for Early Years Professional Status* (EYPS) (CWDC, 2008) include the ability to apply knowledge and experience to reflect upon, think about and improve practice. Clearly reflective practice is seen as having the potential to make a difference for children and their families, as being significant for the way we respond to children and their needs. The challenge for practitioners and those supporting their professional development is how this can be achieved.

〰 Point for reflection

Much has been written about reflective practice resulting in a confusing plethora of interpretations, associated terminology and models. Brookfield (1995: 7) suggested some years ago that one reason for the concept's popularity is the 'malleability in its meaning'. As you engage with the 'process of becoming' an effective reflective practitioner, consider these key questions:

- Why is reflection relevant to me and my practice?
- What is it?
- What does it look like?
- How do I do it?
- What are the benefits?

In seeking answers to these questions there are inherent dangers: firstly, that there is only one answer and, secondly, that someone else knows the answers and can tell you what they are. The ability to think critically and creatively about reflective practice and the confidence and motivation to construct a personal interpretation of what it means for us as individuals in our particular context, is essential to our role as reflective practitioners. This does not mean that we should ignore different perspectives; to further personal understanding it is essential that we engage with and discuss these with others. Through what Brookfield (1995) describes as 'critical reflective thinking' it is possible

to examine the personal, social and political 'assumptions' surrounding what it means to be a reflective practitioner and to reach a position where we as individuals are able to make informed decisions about our practice. He presents a useful model for achieving this through the use of four 'critically reflective lenses' (Brookfield, 1995: 29–39). The principle of looking at any aspect of our practice in relation to our own autobiographies, the 'eyes' of those we are working for, our colleagues' perspectives and theoretical literature is relevant to all of us working within the profession.

Why is it important for us all to adopt a critical stance? Moss (2008: xvi) provides some insight into this when warning us against a narrow interpretation of reflective practice, one that reduces it to the role of a tool for 'governing early childhood educators' or for 'assessing one's own conformity to externally imposed norms'. He also warns us about the dangers of a mechanistic approach to reflective practice and introduces the notion of the 'reflective professional practitioner in marked contrast to the worker-as-technician' (Moss, 2008: xiii). From this perspective, it is not merely a systematic process of acquiring knowledge and skills from 'experts' and using their theories or 'models' to reflect on practice and make changes. These models provide a common reference point for examining thinking and practice but do not include the application in practice which gives them real-life meaning and purpose. They do not consider the role of the individual, or group of individuals who are exploring the relationship between theory and practice, the 'praxis' (Penney and Warelow, 1999) from which personal theories about reflective practice develop and the 'emotional tolerance' (Claxton, 2003: 2) required. These and many other factors inform the development of an individual's 'identity' as a reflective practitioner. Reflective practice is in this sense a never-ending 'learning journey' involving personal and professional qualities and attributes that merge as the individual assumes ownership of thinking processes and actions and develops a personal sense of responsibility for the 'outcomes for children' as individuals and as part of a 'community of practice' (Wenger, 1998). Rather than a 'technician' or apprentice reliant on 'unreflective induction' (Claxton, 2003: 2), the practitioner is perceived here as an 'artist' and reflective practice as an art (Schön 1987), a creative process applied and developed in collaboration with others. With this in mind, the imposition of a strict framework that does not value diversity within the workforce or allow for different approaches and ways of experiencing the learning journey could limit the

development of effective working communities and consequently the outcomes for children.

The 'voices' of those engaged in the process of becoming reflective practitioners provide individual insights into the process, challenges and benefits involved. Their first-hand experience of applying principles in practice, their responses and interpretation of experience provide other practitioners with a genuine insight into reflective practice in action. Moss's (2008: xiii) definition of reflective practice as 'a rigorous process of meaning-making, a continuous process of constructing theories of the world, testing them through dialogue and listening, then reconstructing those theories' is clearly linked with the Reggio Emilia 'pedagogy of listening' (Rinaldi, 2005). Reflective practice as an integral part of professional identity develops most effectively within a culture or learning community where individuals are actively listening and responding to the thoughts and experiences of others. This principle has relevance for anyone working within the early childhood profession, including those leading practice in early years settings such as Early Years Professionals (EYPs) and lecturers in further and higher education. Sharing thoughts and experiences supports the process of making what we know and understand explicit to ourselves as well as to others. This in turn enables us to make sense of experience and practice, to 'play' with ideas and new ways of working. This is what makes reflective practice exciting but also challenging; it involves not only thinking critically about our practice, it is also a creative, open-ended process with many potential interpretations. You can engage in this process on your own, but involve others and the possibilities are endless. This demonstrates its value as an essential element within the concept of lifelong learning and ongoing professional development.

What is involved in being a reflective practitioner?

One of the challenges for developing reflective professionals is in understanding what is involved. From a personal perspective some key themes or processes have emerged:

- **reflection** as a generic term to describe behaviours involving feeling and thinking about thoughts and experiences, in order to identify issues and to develop new understandings and insight;

- **reflective learning** implying a 'sense of open exploration' in order to find out how something is or to find out more about it (Moon, 2008: 26). Askew and Carnell (1998) examine the value of learning through action;

- **reflective thinking** that implies there is a purpose, either consciously or subconsciously. It can include critical thinking that is 'active and deliberate' (Moon, 2008: 26), creative thinking, reflection in action and on action (Schön, 1983, 1987), reflexivity or 'focusing close attention upon one's own actions' and the way 'I am experienced and perceived by others' (Bolton, 2005: 10);

- **reflective writing** as one mode of reflective thinking, expression and representation and stimulus for further reflective thinking;

- **reflective action** which informs and is informed by the other processes;

- **meta-reflection** which involves making the process of reflection explicit – reflection on reflection (Julie Davies – student comment 2008).

Your themes and definitions may be different to these: mine are likely to have changed over time, but that is the point I am making. Do any of us have the definitive answer?

Developing a professional identity: the voices of professional practitioners

The 'voices' that follow represent some of the thoughts and experiences of a diverse group of students of different ages, academic backgrounds, experience in practice and professional roles. The insights gained from individual learning journeys are intended to stimulate questions, thoughts and discussion about the subject, and through this support others in articulating their own thinking and practice. They have provided me with a valuable 'lens' through which I have developed my personal 'voice' as a reflective practitioner (as represented within this chapter). I have also drawn on the perspectives of colleagues who are continually exploring the issue of how we nurture effective reflective practitioners. All of the issues examined in this chapter apply as much to the tutors involved as to the students

The course

All of the 'voices' in this chapter come from students on a distinct one-year BA (Hons) Integrated Early Childhood Studies 'top-up' programme which focuses on the development of students as early childhood professionals, some of whom are or will be practitioners working directly with children and their families. The programme provides a framework for development through core modules that focus on reflective thinking and practice within the context of academic evidence and professional concerns. The learning, teaching and assessment approach is designed to support students' experience of reflective practice and the examination of their identity and learning journey as reflective practitioners within the context of the wider profession. Optional modules provide students with the opportunity to explore aspects of early childhood most relevant to them and their future careers.

Personal ownership and 'identity'

Bolton (2005: xviii), encourages us to 'fly', to 'see how it can be done if you just let go' (Turner, cited in Bolton, 2005: xviii). Personal ownership of the processes involved in being a reflective practitioner can empower us to makes best use of our individual strengths, our personal qualities and attributes. Recognising that reflective practice not only allows you to use what you know and can do but actually requires you to develop your own 'voice' can be a liberating experience. If this is to happen it is essential that reflective practice is owned predominantly by the professional practitioners involved, rather than theorists or policy makers.

〰️ Point for reflection

- What aspects of your practice give you a sense of empowerment?
- Are you conscious that you reflect on your practice and how that thinking informs what you do in similar future situations?
- Can you recognise your own strengths, personal qualities and attributes?
- Do your colleagues recognise the same or different skills?
- Do you feel you have a 'voice'?

Although it is possible to identify and label features of reflective thinking and practice in relation to theory, policy and examples from practice, it is only when we have internalised the evidence and formed our interpretation of the purpose and the process, that it becomes integral to our personal and professional identity. Julie Davis (3rd year student) labelled this process of reflecting on reflection as 'meta-reflection':

> It is the process of examining ones own reflections (reflecting back on past reflections I suppose) and really thinking about and picking to bits the reflective process you have gone through and articulating this in order to reach a deeper understanding of the process itself and how it has enabled (or otherwise!) your ability/capacity to reflect. I think that by engaging in this 'meta-reflection' you are more able to identify future opportunities for reflection (i.e. transfer the skill beyond the immediate experience) and appreciate what a powerful and empowering tool you have at your disposal!

Knowing ourselves

Ownership of the reflective process through 'meta-reflection' involves defining, evaluating and redefining our individual professional 'identity' as reflective thinkers and practitioners. Articulating our thoughts about what being reflective involves and why it is necessary to our practice, how understanding has evolved and identifying what reflective thinking and practice means to us personally and professionally, are all part of the learning process, of 'knowing ourselves'.

> Being reflective involves critically analysing your own practice and looking at what is good and what needs improving. This enables you to be able to set personal targets and to improve future practice. (Nikki Jones)

> It involves me in being honest about my practice and how and why I do things the way I do … I am now more open to changing my thoughts and views about things. (Kelly Hampton)

> It has encouraged me to be more positive in bringing about change in my setting, to improve the quality. (Vicki Page)

Learning journeys

Recognising and valuing the learning journey and significant changes in our thoughts, values and attitudes helps us to define who we are now as well as to recognise that we will continue to change and evolve as reflective practitioners. Learning how to express and record our thoughts is essential to the 'rigorous process of meaning-making'

(Moss, 2008: xiii) and to developing confidence in our identity, for ourselves and for others, whether they are colleagues in the workplace or external bodies such as Ofsted.

> I think I understand now the process of reflection: some of this I did before (intuitively, instinctively, sub-consciously), but having an informed awareness of this has strengthened its value to me and my ability to reflect effectively. Being reflective to me is about really thinking about what I'm doing – while I'm doing it and after I've done it. The focus of my reflection is generally to improve what I'm doing and is generally related to my overarching aims, which is to improve the lives of young children – it is essentially what I am about – it helps to keep my reflection positive and productive. This gives it value to me. (Julie Davis)

Here Julie identifies a clear purpose for her reflection and the role of reflective thinking within this, her definition represents the merging of her personal perspectives with her professional identities (Clough and Corbett, 2000). Establishing a personal rationale for engaging in reflective practice enables her to self-evaluate and to use reflective thinking as a constructive process. She emphasises the importance of thinking about her actions, 'reflecting-in-action' and 'reflecting-on-action' (Schön, 1983, 1987).

The reflective process

In the following example Kim reflects on how her understanding of the reflective process developed from re-visiting an experience into a deeper appreciation of its potential for personal learning and improving practice. Action, in the view of Askew and Carnell (1998), is essential to the learning process.

> I used to think it was just about thinking over what I had done – thinking about things that had happened, but with no real result or action following the reflective process. Now I know how effective it can be in improving practice and actually changing what I think, say and do at work. It's not just about grand, massive revelations – it's the small everyday points that matter too. The small changes can make a massive difference to children!

Kim's belief in the value of reflective practice has developed from personal experience; she has 'seen' the difference it can make to children. Her sense of responsibility for the children's well-being is evident and consequently she is motivated to learn more about the processes involved, to deepen her understanding in order to improve her practice further. Brookfield's (1995) 'autobiographical lens' is a useful tool for examining assumptions and supporting a deeper level of critical thinking.

> In making effective changes to practice, we need to look at ourselves objectively and reflect upon our own values and principles with an open mind. Through my professional development, the knowledge that I have acquired has led me to question why I hold the values that I do and where they stem from … Through engaging with my memories and the emotions attached to them I have a much clearer picture of who I am … Through my greater self-awareness I am now able to see how my views and values influence my practice and those around me. (Alice Barnett)

Here Alice demonstrates qualities associated with the 'reflexive-minded practitioner' which Bolton (2005) defines as 'focusing close attention upon one's own actions, thoughts, feelings, values, identity and their effect upon others, situations and professional and social structures' (Bolton, 2005: 10).

Developing your identity as a reflective professional practitioner – commitment to personal change

Developing your identity as a reflective professional practitioner who aspires to be more than a 'worker-as-technician' (Moss, 2008: xiii) requires commitment as an 'agent' of personal change and recognition of your role and responsibility as a learner as well as a practitioner …

> Taking a step back to think critically, to evaluate my experiences in order to engage in a process of life-long learning and conscious change as a professional based on informed and ethical experiences. (Shanna Bradley)

This commitment includes developing and maintaining a questioning approach where …

> The most important thing is that you explore 'why'. Often this in turn supports change. (Permjit Tanda)

> It's not just looking at *what* you did, it's thinking about *why* you did it; the values and beliefs you have that made you behave that way. (Kim Fox)

Developing your identity as a reflective professional practitioner is also about recognising the change in personal understanding and practice.

> I initially considered reflection to only mean what something looked like, however I now understand that it can answer so many more questions including why, how and the impact of my actions on others. (Angela Dyer)

The reflective practitioner is in this sense represented as 'an intellectually curious person who rejects a passive approach to knowledge

and prefers to construct knowledge together with others rather than simply "consume" it' (Rinaldi, 2005: 135). This would suggest that it is possible to learn and yet not fully open yourself up to the possibility of personal change. For example, avoiding critical examination of what you are 'choosing' to learn may result in easily assimilated 'knowledge' that does not challenge current assumptions or encourage independent interpretation. As the following examples from academic essays illustrate, the process of understanding yourself through reflective learning enables you to evaluate your thinking, understand the difference between deep rather than surface learning and to identify what has changed and what needs to change.

> My early understanding of the reflective process reflected 'single loop' rather than 'double loop' learning (Argris and Schon, 1978). Single-loop learning seems to be present when goals, value frameworks and strategies are taken for granted (Smith, 2001). The emphasis is on changing the activity rather than the governing principles. I have since realised that reflection is a much deeper process. Bolton (2005) believes reflective practice can be risky and disruptive as it challenges us to look at our assumptions and prejudices and what we are avoiding, laying everything open to question. When these underlying norms, policies, values and principles are examined and questioned double-loop learning occurs. My main area of learning in this cycle was not in the initial issue but in my own attitude. (Sue Foster)

> Through further reading I was able to gain crucial knowledge about reflective intelligence also known as meta-learning or meta-cognition (Askew and Carnel, 1998) which includes strategies for self-monitoring, mental management and helping individuals create a positive attitude towards investing mental effort into issues. This helped me to understand that in order to move forward I needed to change my attitude. (Permjit Tanda)

These examples demonstrate the application of reflective thinking processes supported by the students' willingness to research different perspectives and to use these to self-evaluate and to inform personal change. However, identifying what is significant for you and internalising the evidence can be a challenge when the 'working memory' is overwhelmed by information from experience and other sources (Feuerstein, cited in Petty, 2004). If you are engaged in a programme of study, assessment of learning can also be an inhibiting factor as you struggle to construct personal meanings within someone else's framework and expectations. The act of constructing your personal meanings and developing your 'voice' or interpretation is, however, essential to the development of your identity, competence and confidence as a reflective professional practitioner.

Learning experiences

Learning experiences that have the potential to transform your way of thinking, to provide the cognitive challenge needed to stimulate the accommodation of different perspectives, can be an emotional as well as an intellectual experience.

> Initially, thinking about thoughts and actions – why I did something – why then – why that way – was it right – was it fair or good?. Could I have done it better – should I have done it all? What encouraged me to do something or react that way? How can I improve? At a deeper level opening up to being vulnerable to risk. (Sue Foster)

> It's been really hard to make reflective practice become part of what I do. Reading about the theory of it only gives you so much – you have to do it to understand why it is so important. It's only when you do it that you can really get to grips with it. Even then it's still not easy and takes practice to get deep, not just superficially look at your practice. (Kim Fox)

How you respond to learning experiences can depend on your understanding of your role as learner and practitioner. For some, the belief that there is one 'right' answer limits the search for new ways of thinking, the use of the evidence and consequently the potential for new understandings and changes to the values and beliefs that inform their practice. In the following example Sammy-Jo has discovered the potential of reflective learning as a process that she now 'owns'.

> Since being in practice I have realised that I'm constantly thinking about the way we work with children, the theories behind our actions. I find myself reflecting in and on action more, I can question theorists and fellow practitioners' views and practice as well as my own. Being reflective means being open-minded about everything. There is no right or wrong answer … I am now more confident in my ability to reflect as my understanding is that reflection is personal, never concrete, it is forever changing and challenging, a skill that takes a lifetime to perfect, if it can be perfected at all. Reflection is a skill which needs time, motivation and determination to be able to develop yourself … It involves being strong enough to step beyond your 'comfort zone', challenge yourself and delve deeper into the situation – explore without an outcome in mind. (Sammy-Jo Morgan)

For Sammy-Jo, this ability to reflect involves more than learning a systematic approach or set of rules; she now feels confident that whilst recognising what others have to say about reflective practice she can and should make sense of it herself in terms of her own experience. She is also recognising that this is an ongoing process and, as Bolton (2005) suggests, is able to 'let go' and explore new possibilities.

Expressing and representing thought, feelings and experiences

The expression and representation of thoughts, feelings and experiences provides reflective practitioners with the means through which current understandings and new possibilities can be explored. Telling or writing our stories is in Bolton's (2005) view a reflective mode of thinking.

> Having the opportunity to recall a critical incident which is of significance has facilitated my understanding of reflective practice. It has made it easier to understand the relevance of theory and has also given me the opportunity to explore my own value base. (Permjit Tanda)

For many of the students on the course writing a reflective journal has proved to be valuable tool for recording thoughts and feelings and as a stimulus for a deeper learning and personal change.

> I do not normally write a diary but through using a journal I have been able to reflect on my professional and personal identity and consequently move forward. (Rachel Challacombe)

> Engaging in a personal learning log has helped me to begin to think critically about my experiences … it shows progression in the trust I have developed in being reflective as a way of developing as an early years practitioner and in personal change. (Shanna Bradley)

Although expressing thoughts in this way suits some people, discovering the best way for you to express yourself is part of the process of developing your identity as a reflective practitioner. Through personal experience Rachel and Shanna discovered for themselves the benefits of exploring a different approach. Writing poetry, creating diagrams or mind-maps are other approaches have been used within a journal or as a separate process to support reflective thinking; the essential factor is finding methods which support your reflective thinking and learning process.

Reflective 'communities of learning and practice'

When considering the identification and development of an individual's identity as a reflective practitioner it is useful to consider Wenger's (1998: 4) view that 'learning as social participation shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do'. From this perspective, the reflective practitioner you are now,

and the one you will become, has and will be influenced by the communities in which you learn and practise. The nature of the individuals within these communities and your interaction with them is likely to inform not only your reflective practice but also your identity and self-concept as a reflective practitioner. Sarah has discovered the benefits of this shared participation for reflective practice.

> Reflection involves taking a step back and trying to look at things from a different perspective … it is something personal but sometimes it takes someone else to help you to discuss things, think them through and see it differently. (Sarah Rowberry)

Not only may you see things 'differently', you may also see yourself differently. Participating in a range of communities of learning and practice that offer different perspectives can help us to question and think more clearly about our values, actions and experiences. 'Communities of practice' in this sense is more a series of dynamic and fluid processes between different individuals in different contexts rather than a fixed term to describe a specific group or team. Depending on the nature of the issues being considered and the ethical issues involved, there is potential for colleagues, children and their families to be involved in a dynamic and stimulating reflective process, co-constructing knowledge, making and sharing meaning. Programmes of study that value and encourage 'shared participation' in the reflective learning process provide opportunities for students to work as a learning community.

> We were encouraged to discuss issues through online discussion, through face-to-face group participation and were presented with material which on occasions questioned our value base. Online discussions encouraged us within the safety of our groups to discuss issues and encouraged us to think laterally as described by De Bono (1990), the concept of exploring ideas with no solution in mind. We were learning the value of divergent and convergent thinking, the ability to generate alternative perspectives on problems rather than following standardised formats for problem solving. More importantly a safe environment had been created as recognised by Rogers (1967) in order for creative thinking to flow, which was especially important to my learning. (Permjit Tanda)

Within her writing Permjit is expressing and representing what she has learned about reflective practice as a creative process as well as her reflections on how she was learning; this in itself is an essential part of her learning process. Conferencing, whether online or face to face is one of many ways of creating a learning environment in which participants feel able and 'safe' to express their thoughts and share experiences without fear of being judged; it is possible to 'play'

with ideas, explore possibilities, think critically about evidence and to 'create' new understandings through dialogue with others. However, although approaches such as conferencing can provide a valuable scaffold for dissemination, discussion and debate, the benefits are dependent on the willingness of the individuals involved to partici-pate in the process and to recognise and value different professional identities (Anning et al., 2006). Involvement can be enhanced if the participants understand the role of learning and practice communities and how they can support their professional development.

Understanding how the communities you experience can and do work in practice and your role within them is part of the process of 'becoming a reflective practitioner', of understanding your profes-sional identity. For example, if as Liebermann (2007: 199) states, 'learning communities become arenas for professional learning because the people imbue activities with shared meanings, develop a sense of belonging, and create new identities based, in part, on their relationships with one another', then each of us can have a role in nurturing positive relationships, in developing a 'safe environment' and a genuine sense of community in order to effect change. This is not always easy. Engestrom (1999, cited in Anning et al., 2006) argues that individuals with different knowledge and histories need a shared vision for the future whilst 'articulating differences, explor-ing alternatives, modelling solutions, examining an agreed model and implementing activities' (Anning et al., 2006: 11). Practitioners who can lead the development of a reflective community of practice are likely to be experienced in the reflective process, confident in their own personal perspective, professional identity and role as a learner and member of the community. Consequently, they are able to recognise and value different strengths and approaches while acknowledging that everyone's journey is different.

The wider context

Campbell et al. (2004: 10) argue that the 'reflective practitioner is by definition a researcher, researching not just their own professional context but, crucially, researching that context as they act within it'. Bolton (2005: 5) however, reminds us that reflective practice should go beyond personal 'navel-gazing' and be examined in terms of wider social and political structures. Extending our participation in com-munities of learning and practice beyond everyday experience is

essential for the development of personal and shared understandings and re-evaluation of values and practices. A commitment to personal change as evidence-based practitioners (Campbell et al., 2004) or practitioner researchers (Campbell et al., 2004), through reading and participation in events such as conferences, special interest groups and professional bodies, will facilitate the ongoing process of examining and challenging issues from different perspectives.

> Reading recommended texts on reflective practice has stimulated me to think more deeply about me and my thoughts. I challenge my own beliefs and after consideration and evaluation facilitate change in my practice both in and out of the childcare setting. (Lianne Piggott)

This process of continuing professional development can also include your role in disseminating your own research and the insights gained to a wider audience. The pictures of practice examined within this book provide insights into other ways of being, experiencing, perceiving and practising. What is important is the way we as individuals and as communities of practice process the evidence; that we adopt a critical stance supported by existing knowledge and understandings. In this way reflective practice becomes a tool not only for enlightenment but also a tool for empowerment. Theory provides us with a range of tools that can help us with the process of 'meta-reflection', to help us understand our professional identity as reflective practitioners, to support the processes in practice and to evaluate the outcomes. We can apply theoretical frameworks and models to help us recognise what is significant and to give us the confidence to apply some of the principles and insights in ways we might not have previously. It is essential that we utilise good quality tools and materials, but it is the way that these are used that enables the practitioner to think critically and creatively and to develop beyond the role of the worker-as-technician' (Moss, 2008: xiii).

Summary

How can we as reflective practitioners aspire to be effective 'change agents' within our professional roles and contribute to the process of ensuring positive outcomes for children if we do not understand who we are, what we are about, why we do what we do and how this is being achieved? How can we support others within our 'communities of practice' if we do not understand our own learning journey and understand

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and value the journeys experienced by others? This chapter has examined why it is essential that as individuals and professionals, whether front line practitioners, managers, policy makers or lecturers, we articulate and have confidence in our developing identity as reflective practitioners and what this involves. We should take ownership of the reflective process as individuals and within communities of learning and practice, supported by a commitment to personal change and to learning from and with others within and beyond our personal experience. The chapters that follow will provide you with an opportunity to extend the range of your learning experience, to explore different insights, theories and practice. Whilst reading them, 'listen' to the voices of reflection, explore what they are saying about their identity and the implications for their practice. Reflect on how this relates to you and your learning journey.

Postscript

Email from a colleague:

> Hi Karen, read your chapter … but have you thought about the impact of Wenger's communities of practice?

Extract from reflective diary:

> Oh no, I thought I had finished … here I go again … but do I want to think about this again? ... It is a good point though … If I just do a little more reading we can talk about it tomorrow …

Suggested further reading 📖

- Bolton, G. (2005) *Reflective Practice: Writing and Professional Development.* 2nd edn. London: Sage Publications.
  This book discusses the importance of reflective practice for professional development. It analyses how reflective practice can support both personal and interdisciplinary knowledge and understanding.

- Paige-Smith, A. and Craft, A. (eds) (2007) *Developing Reflective Practice in the Early Years.* Buckingham: Open University Press.
  This book provides a comprehensive view of professional practice. It underlines the importance of reflection on practice to improve professional development

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