

ACADEMIC AND EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Module Code: BMSW4001

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Introduction

This report represents a reflective account on personal development of my academic and employability skills learned during this module. The most important topics I have improved upon during this module, which will prove to be an asset for my future career development, were related to paraphrasing, summarising, CV writing, writing a cover letter, critical thinking and summarising

To structure this reflection I have decided to use Gibbs's reflective model (1988), which I consider to be appropriate to present what I have learned, how I felt about the experiences, the evaluation of the experiences, an analysis of what was learned, followed by a conclusion and an action plan. I find this structure appropriate because I consider that Gibbs's 1988 model is well known and effective, and this approach reflects my personal learning style of learning by doing. The diagram of the reflective cycle is presented below:

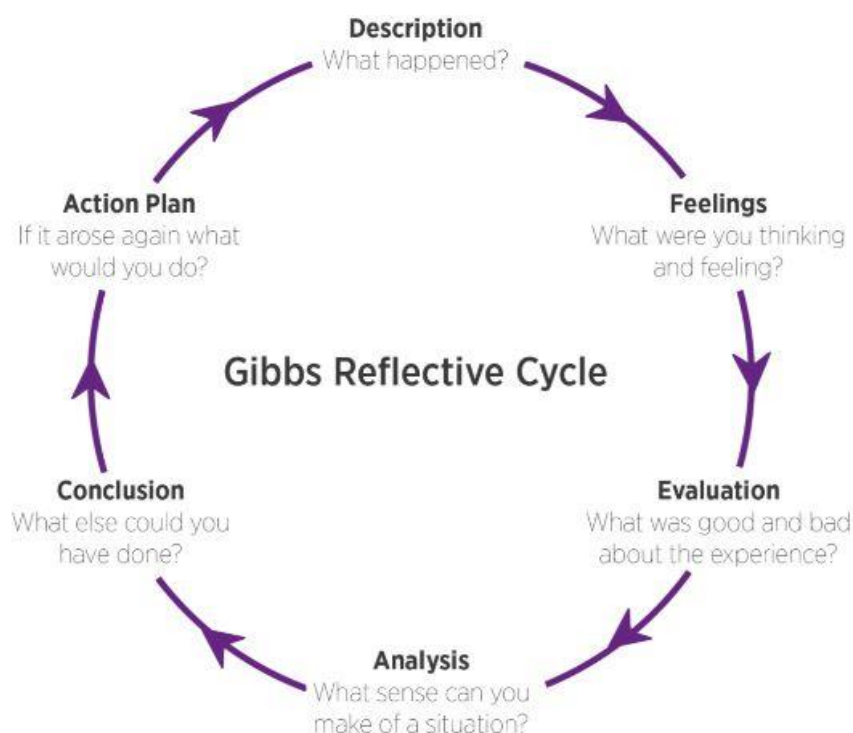


Image 1: Gibbs's reflective model

Description

During this module I was exposed to a lot of information regarding various academic and employability topics which I consider to be helpful for my future career development. In addition, I had the opportunity to engage in critical thinking and self-reflection which enabled me to assess my strengths, as well as my weaknesses in terms of employability skills using a SWOT analysis as seen in appendix A. Also, by learning all this information about different academic topics, I was able to improve my critical thinking and use it to identify development opportunities and improve upon certain skills that will help me achieve greater success in my professional life. I have now learned about what employers look for when hiring, what kind of skills are expected and what abilities will improve my chances of obtaining better jobs and positions. I realised that not only hard skills and academic knowledge is appreciated, but also a series of abilities can improve the prospects of getting good employment.

I now consider good CV writing much more impactful since I have learned that not only factual information and experience are what makes a CV good, but by expanding on my abilities and achievements the quality of my first impression can be greatly improved. As thegraduaterecruitment.co.uk, (2019) mentions, “when applying for a job, whether it’s your first one, a completely new one or a promotion within the same organisation, your CV is the first change you have to make a good impression. It’s the thing that has to set you apart in the minds of the recruiter, based purely on the words on the page they have in front of them. The importance of a well-written CV cannot be underestimated.”

The cover letter has become from an extra hassle to deal with when applying for a job, to an opportunity to impress and increase my chances of success. As supported by Smith, (2019) who said that “It acts as a personal introduction and helps sell your application. A cover letter is necessary as it gives you the chance to explain to an employer why you’re the best candidate for the job.”

Feelings

The learning experience from this module has made me feel more prepared to have a significant contribution in a company as an employee. For instance, I was interested to learn that employers look for certain soft skills in an employee, however, as Messum et al. (2017) have noted, there are situations when employers perceptions about what skills an employee should have do not match the perception the employee may have. While work integrated learning is now part of the general learning experience in higher education with the purpose of producing graduates which are ready to be integrated in a work force, employers sometimes feel universities do not fully prepare students for work. As evidence, Messum et al. (2017) found that employers in the health care system in Australia have given a higher rating of importance for self-management and employability skills than graduates, while critical thinking has been rated by graduates significantly higher. Regarding to this, I feel this module through its available learning materials, can contribute to closing this gap. A good example of this was the first lesson of the second term, where we looked at different job descriptions and requirements and identified relevant skills and abilities that would be required for such jobs as shown in appendix B and C.

Evaluation

The experience of learning thorough this module has had both positive and negative aspects. The first positive aspect I observed was the focus on the different aspects of academic writing like summarising and paraphrasing which have been developed in other courses through class activities, and can be observed even in the examples shown in appendixes A, B, and C. I also noticed that teachers actively help in developing my abilities by creating relevant in class activities. For instance, self-reflection or critical self-reflection helped me to develop a sense of critical thinking which also improved a practical problem solving skill. Similarly, engaging in various activities develops writing abilities. All these ultimately improve my performance and value in relation to a workplace. In support of this, Pardo-Garcia and Barac (2020) argued that “Students obtain the entrepreneurship competences related to employability skills i.e., innovative thinking, teamwork, problem solving, empathy and ability to build relationships, communicating an idea, and the competition gives them the opportunity of working on a practical project, which can be the departing point of professional experience when it is non-existent or very scarce.”

Another positive aspect was the feedback I received for a CV homework that I emailed to my tutor, as can be seen in appendix D. This feedback contained practical advice and was detailed enough to make me understand not only how to fix my CV, but also that I need to improve certain areas like grammar and the style of writing.

As far as negative aspects are concerned, I have found it difficult at times to engage with my fellow student colleagues, mainly due to the pandemic related restrictions. This has limited face to face interactions for safety reasons, and I consider it has negatively impacted communication among colleagues, or among teachers and students. However, seeing how more and more organisations are beginning to focus on plans in which employees are allowed to work from home more, where possible, I am considering that society is currently undergoing a change in how companies and employees work, and this may also bring a change in the way workplaces operate in general.

Analysis

Individual research has contributed significantly to my understanding of the concepts presented during this module. In my view, improving the two categories of academic writing, which are related to paraphrasing and summarising, along with CV and cover letter writing will greatly improve the quality of my employability profile, and a strong critical thinking ability will improve my own personal worth in relation to a professional environment. As far as employers go, being able to handle one's own work and being willing to take up challenges or extra work is something employers seek (Lisa et al., 2019). Once the employee has a good grasp of his or her own activities and it takes up less time for him or her to perform those activities, the employer would expect them to be willing to develop and learn new activities. This is seen by employers as a key attribute for people who quickly evolve in their careers (Lisa et al., 2019), however students sometimes fail to acknowledge that. Also, students can have an unrealistic perception of their own abilities and strengths and they may fail to accept when a tutor or employer offers constructive criticism. Due to this it is very important for me as a student to engage in activities of critical thinking which are meant to improve my self-awareness and identify which are my strengths and also the areas which require further development. I consider that self-reflection, which is an important component of critical thinking as Rauch et al. (2015) also explain, to be the best approach as I will gain realistic views and actually give myself a chance to improve in these areas. As work nowadays is becoming more and more challenging, and some of the operational routine tasks are either outsourced or taken care of using different technologies, the human work force must bring into the organisation abilities which machines do not possess, and those abilities, according to Rauch et al. (2015), relate to creative problem solving and innovation. While I consider that such abilities come with experience, I also think that they are components of critical thinking and can be improved by further studying the topic and applying it. Rauch et al. (2015), also agrees that problem solving techniques can be improved by continuously reflecting upon previous experiences and learning from them, through critical thinking.

Conclusion

To summarise, during this module I have learned important concepts relating to the importance of academic writing. At the end of the module I can argue that I have become familiar with these topics and understand how to apply them in my professional life, and thanks to critical thinking I identified more exactly my level of development in relation to Summarising, Paraphrasing, CV writing, Cover letter writing, thus enabling me to improve in areas that I thought did not need improvement. Thanks to in class activities, I was able to associate them with real life examples both in my school and work life, and practice their use which greatly helped me to understand them better. Considering that the today's work place is defined by rapid change and technological and social progress, as noted by Alton, L., (2018), that further claims that "The rate of change in today's workplace is accelerating, and if you aren't prepared, it could dramatically impact your career.", I believe it is my responsibility as a student to take advantage of the knowledge acquired during this module and take responsibility for my own personal development. Universities and teaching establishments employ learning strategies that are effective and efficient in preparing students to develop their professional skills, therefore I consider this module has been an opportunity for me to develop both at a personal and a professional level.

Action plan

As a future direction for the development of the topics I have learnt to be important, I consider that there is more room for improvement. I would agree with the authors who encourage critical thinking and self-reflection, such as Rauch et al. (2015), or Appleby, (2016), because I find it to be a good approach to evaluate your own performance in a realistic manner and be honest about strengths, as well as weaknesses. Also, critical thinking and individual study can help a person identify opportunities for development that they may be unaware of otherwise.

As an action plan, I will continue to engage in further research in order to develop my paraphrasing, summarising and CV writing abilities. In the future, I will also engage in more research type activities, in order to further develop my critical thinking ability, as Appleby, (2016) notes “Employers seek out people who can solve problems, analyse data and create new ideas. One way to develop the critical thinking and research skills employers value is to participate in research projects that require critical thinking skills”. I strongly believe that this will also improve the quality of my professional work.

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Appendix:

Appendix A

	Academic Skills	Employability Skills
Strength	I have good skills in paraphrasing and conceptualizing things with the help of examples. I am good at researching different topics	I am good at leadership skills and communication skills
Weakness	I face problem in learning the stuff by heart (memorisation)	I am facing problems in time management and organizational skills due to heavy workload
Opportunity	Since I can paraphrase the text, I can get a good job for the position of content writing and report writing skills.	I believe that I have advantaged with effective leadership skills, which can play a major role in accomplishing my career objective.
Threats	I believe that my ineffective time management skills can negatively influence on my current job performance, and also in future career prospect.	I am feeling threatened due to my bad time management and organizational skills that I might lose my job or reputation at work.

Appendix B

Recruitment consultant: JOB DESCRIPTION

Working in recruitment is like working in sales, where your basic salary could be bolstered by potentially high on-target earnings (OTE) in the form of performance-related bonuses or commission

Recruitment consultants are responsible for attracting candidates for jobs and matching them to temporary or permanent positions with client companies. You'll build positive relationships in order to gain a better understanding of your clients' recruitment needs and requirements.

Working as a recruitment consultant, you'll attract candidates by drafting advertising copy for use in a range of media, as well as by networking, headhunting and through referrals. You'll screen candidates, interview them, run background checks and finally match them to their clients.

You also provide advice to both clients and candidates on salary levels, training requirements and career opportunities.

Responsibilities

As a recruitment consultant, you're the vital link between clients and candidates. The role is demanding, diverse and involves:

- using sales, business development, marketing techniques and networking to attract business from client companies
- visiting clients to build and develop positive relationships with them
- developing a good understanding of client companies, their industry, what they do, their work culture and environment
- advertising vacancies by drafting and placing adverts in a range of media, such as newspapers, websites and magazines
- using social media to advertise positions, attract candidates and build relationships
- headhunting – identifying and approaching suitable candidates who may already be in work
- using candidate databases to match the right person to the client's vacancy
- receiving and reviewing applications, managing interviews and tests and creating a shortlist of candidates for the client
- requesting references and checking the suitability of applicants before submitting

Recruitment consultant

Skills

You will need to show evidence of the following:

- excellent interpersonal and communication skills
- sales and negotiation skills
- a goal-orientated approach to work
- the ability to handle multiple priorities
- problem-solving ability
- the ability to meet deadlines and targets
- ambition and the determination to succeed
- tenacity
- confidence and self-motivation
- time management and organisational skills
- team-working skills
- creativity.

You must also enjoy working in a high-pressure environment and the responsibility that comes with it.

Source: <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles/recruitment-consultant>

Appendix (continued):

Appendix C

OFFICE MANAGER: JOB DESCRIPTION

Office managers are responsible for the efficient functioning of an office through a range of administrative, financial and managerial tasks. The job can be very wide-ranging.

What does an office manager do?

Office managers essentially ensure the smooth running of an office on a day-to-day basis and may manage a team of administrative or support staff. Responsibilities typically include:

- organising meetings and managing databases
- booking transport and accommodation
- organising company events or conferences
- ordering stationery and furniture
- dealing with correspondence, complaints and queries
- preparing letters, presentations and reports
- supervising and monitoring the work of administrative staff
- managing office budgets
- liaising with staff, suppliers and clients
- implementing and maintaining procedures/office administrative systems
- delegating tasks to junior employees
- organising induction programmes for new employees
- ensuring that health and safety policies are up to date
- using a range of software packages
- attending meetings with senior management
- assisting the organisation's **HR function** by keeping personnel records up to date, arranging interviews and so on.

However, depending on the size and structure of the organisation, the role of office manager can also be combined with another office-based job role, for example:

- **HR assistant**
- **Corporate secretary**
- **Facilities manager** (by taking responsibility for the upkeep of the building)
- **Marketing assistant**

Duties will often include some of the traditional duties of a **PA** or administrator, but the role can be more wide-ranging.

Typical employers of office managers

OFFICE MANAGER

Key skills for office managers

Reliability and discretion: you will often learn of confidential matters

Adaptability

Communication, negotiation and relationship-building skills

Organisational skills

IT skills

Problem solving skills

Initiative

Leadership and the ability to 'make things happen'

Budgeting skills

Attention to detail.

Source: <https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/job-descriptions/276241-office-manager-job-description>

Appendix D

DANIEL COSTACHE

10a Newmarket Green, SE9 5ER, London, UK - 07340964139
costachedanielg@yahoo.com

I am a undergraduate student in a leadership and management programme. As an owner of a few small businesses I am keen on developing and advancing my skills in administrating and managing business

EXPERIENCE

APRIL 2012 – MAY 2014

GRAPHICS EDITOR, RAI 1

This was a junior position with Italian national television, editing advertisements for commercial breaks.

OCTOBER 2016 – OCTOBER 2019

ASSISTANT MANAGER, NET-A-PORTER

Started as a warehouse operative and advanced as an assistant manager for the last 8 months. I was assigned to inbound department, receiving and replenishing stock.

MARCH 2020 – PRESENT

DISTRIBUTION OPERATIVE, AMAZON

Working in Same Day Deliveries department in an Amazon Distribution Centre. The job involves receiving parcels and preparing routes for local deliveries.

EDUCATION

AUGUST 2009

HIGH SCHOOL, LICEO SCIENTIFICO ENRICO FERMI, ROMA, IT

SKILLS

- Good digital and internet skills
- Strong leadership skills
- Managing and completing complex projects
- Hard working
- Good communication skills
- Problem solving

ACTIVITIES

I created the online perfume retailer <https://perfumist.co.uk> as my own business which I am currently developing and expanding.
In April 2020, I established the Android Apps developing company (not incorporated) Wonder-Games <https://play.google.com/store/apps/developer?id=Wonder-Games>. Currently with 2 active apps in the

Dear Daniel,

I hope this finds you well.

Thank you for sending the CV for feedback.

1. Please review spelling and grammar, especially in the personal profile. Also remember to add one section (middle section) on what you can offer.

2. Please review the links provided in class regarding chronological and skills-based cv.

3. Consider looking at a Job Description for the roles you have experienced as this may help you to improve your style of writing.

4. Be specific about the digital skills

5. Check sentence structure. Font size consistency.

6. Activities is not only work related. Potential employers are interested in the 'whole'

For future reference please do not include your personal details in formal correspondence to your lecturer. This is due to legislation.

Kind regards,

Jo Walsh

Lecturer