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Module Name: Professional Career Development

Module Code: BMSW4012

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**Assignment Title: Professional Career Development reflective
essay – Part 1**

1. Introduction

Professional career development plays a vital role for graduates as it helps them during the transition from academic life to professional life. This type of career development is essential for graduates as it shapes their personal skills, ethics and knowledge possessed by the students while moving into the professional world (Robertson *et al.*, 2020). Professional career development allows the individuals to mark out their areas of weaknesses and work upon it with help of different models and theories. In this particular essay the Rolf's Reflective cycle is used which answers three main questions such as What, So what and Now what figuring out the possible learning journey of students in their learning process. The three models which are selected from class learnings are SWOT, SMART goals and Johari Window for enhancing the study.

2. What? (description of experience)

In my university there were different sessions of lectures which were held for the students to learn and gain knowledge about the development that is required in their professional career. These particular lectures have helped me to gain experience about the different ways in which my personal and professional skills both can be uplifted. One of the most engaging aspects of the module was its interactive approach, which included reflective exercises, group discussions, case studies, and presentations. In the words of Cottrell (2021), reflective sessions highlight the importance of knowing oneself, planning effectively, and presenting one's strengths in a professional context.

In these particular lecture sessions, I have learnt about three key development models such as SWOT, SMART goals and Johari window which helped me to assess my personal and professional attributes. Firstly, the SWOT model has helped me to identify my own weaknesses and strengths along with opportunities and threats in alignment with the career goals. Next SMART goals have helped me to identify specific areas of development along with understanding the required goals that need to be undertaken for better improvements. Lastly, the Johari window was a powerful tool for improving my self-awareness and communication by helping me understand how I perceive myself and how others perceive me.

I had also been part of different group works where collaboration with other group members had showcased my interpersonal skills and I learned and reflected about my weaker and stronger skills. There were group discussions as well along with career development plans

where I had taken an active part. I also delivered a short presentation on my personal development plan, which not only improved my public speaking skills but also allowed me to reflect deeply on my career path.

3. So what? (Understanding and Learning Gained)

3.1 Personal Learning and Self Awareness

Engagement in different professional career development tasks are a better way in itself to help students to be self-aware about skills and attributes which require improvements as well the skills which are possessed by the students (Gallagher, 2022). I believe that my engagement in professional career development at my university during my course has helped me to shape my interpersonal skills along with professional skills. At first before I had attended any lectures, I was clear about the fact that I possess strong leadership and communication skills. However, I was unaware of what my peers or other group students perceive about me. It is with the help of Johari window model which opened up my self-awareness about my skills. According to the opinions of Cottrell (2019), Johari window is a development tool which allows individuals to assess their own qualities along with understanding what others perceive of them. The introduction of the Johari Window model was instrumental in developing my self-awareness. This model, which is based on four quadrants, open, blind, hidden and unknown, enabled me to explore aspects of myself that were previously unknown to me or unrecognised by others. The blind spots which I had discovered was my tendency to suddenly dominate any kind of discussions which were purely unintentional. On the other hand, I was an active listener along with possessing empathy that was valued by others. The model encouraged me to disclose more about myself in professional settings and to seek feedback more openly, which helped build trust and improve collaboration with peers.

3.2 Goal Setting and Planning

Goal setting and planning are an essential part of career development as setting up of goals provide indicative solutions to elevate one's weaker attributes (Smale, 2015). On the other hand, as opined by Dweck (2017), planning helps to work on the set goals with a definite achievement purpose of improving one's skills and bringing in development. In my case, I had been setting up SMART goals for my development of professional and interpersonal skills which are mentioned below in the table 1:

Specifications	Descriptions
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<i>S – Specific</i>	I set a clear professional goal: To secure a digital marketing internship with a reputed company to gain hands-on industry experience.
<i>M – Measurable</i>	The goal was measurable as I aimed to apply to at least 10 relevant internship positions and receive at least 2 interview calls within 2 months.
<i>A – Achievable</i>	The goal was realistic since I had completed coursework in marketing and built a portfolio showcasing projects and social media campaigns developed during my studies.
<i>R – Relevant</i>	This goal aligned with my career interest in marketing and supported my long-term objective of becoming a digital marketing strategist.
<i>T – Time-bound</i>	I set a deadline of eight weeks from the start of my application process to track progress and ensure I stayed focused and motivated.

Table 1: SMART goals

(Source: Self-Created)

Applying the SMART model gave my career planning structure and direction. It helped me break down a large goal into manageable steps and boosted my confidence. I successfully secured an interview with a top agency, and even though I was not selected, the experience enhanced my readiness and interview performance for future roles.

3.3 Strengths, Weaknesses and Career Directions

Strengths	Weaknesses
Strong communication skills, adaptability, and willingness to learn. These strengths have consistently helped me work effectively in teams and engage in leadership roles.	Limited practical industry experience and nervousness during interviews. Recognising these helped me focus on gaining internships and practicing mock interviews.
Opportunities	Threats
Access to career development workshops, growing demand for digital skills, and networking events provided by the	High competition in the job market and evolving employer expectations. Staying

university. These resources offer pathways to growth.	updated with industry trends and continuous skill development became necessary.
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Table 2: SWOT model application

(Source: Self-Created)

In words of Yanhua *et al.*, (2025), SWOT model helps to guide a student towards career planning and obtaining deep insights into their interpersonal skills suited for the particular suitable job roles. The SWOT analysis helped me realise that while I have a solid foundation in soft skills, I need to enhance technical competencies through internships and certifications. Also as opined by Vasilev (2025), career planning helps students to understand the particular job role that they want to pursue. It guided me to develop a focused action plan, such as enrolling in a digital marketing certification and actively participating in networking activities. Overall, the SWOT analysis was a practical tool that gave me clarity on my current capabilities and provided a structured approach to career planning and improvement.

4. Now what? (Future Application and Development Plan)

Moving forward, I plan to apply the skills and knowledge gained through the Professional Career Development module to shape a well-structured career path. In the short term, I aim to complete an internship in my field to gain practical experience and refine my communication and teamwork skills. In the words of Hora *et al.*, (2021), internship helps individuals to gain better work experience along with understanding their own professional skills and limits. Long-term, I plan to pursue a leadership role in digital marketing, supported by ongoing learning and certifications. Leadership skills are very much prioritised in modern times and proper all action of this skill helps an individual to excel in professional grounds (ANANYI and Ololube, 2023). I will regularly use SMART goals to track progress and adjust plans, while SWOT analysis will help reassess strengths and weaknesses. The Johari Window will guide self-awareness and feedback. Challenges such as self-doubt or industry competition may arise, but I intend to overcome them through resilience, continuous improvement, and proactive networking to stay aligned with industry expectations.

5. Conclusion

It can be deduced from the entire analysis that with the help of Rolfe's reflective cycle framework, I have been able to successfully contribute towards my professional career development. The three particular models such as SWOT, SMART goals and Johari window

have helped me to analyse deeply about my professional and interpersonal skills. It also helped me to set targeted goals and work upon them within a particular time period for gaining better results. Moreover, I am also able to understand that my professional career is mostly in digital marketing where my scope for progress is also present.

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