

PROFESSIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT

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Table of Content

Introduction.....	2
Personal Reflexion	2
Self – awareness.....	2
Career Development	4
Skills and Knowledge	6
Employment goals and Personal Development Plan (PDP).....	9
SMART Goals Technique	10
Conclusion.....	12
Reference.....	13

Introduction

The aim of this report is to conduct a self-reflection, based on my personal and professional career development. On what I have learned through my path, analysing the skills that I have gained, the skills that are my strength and weakness and what are the plans for my career development.

Personal Reflexion

Personal reflection or self-reflection is the analysis and evaluation of our thoughts, feelings, acts and behaviour (Silvia and Phillips, 2011, cited in Grant et al., 2002). The ability to self-reflect is very important for a person to self-regulate, self-evaluate and self-criticism, that is, for the person to know himself better (Silvia and Phillips, 2011, cited in Carver, 2003; Duval and Silvia, 2001).

Self – awareness

Self-awareness is an evaluative process aimed at our interior, in which, it allows our self-knowledge, getting to know our personalities better and what we are made of, leading to our improvement (Rubens et al., 2018). In this module we have learned a few tools that help us on our self-awareness, one of them is the Johari window.

Johari Window

According with UWTSD (2019 - 2020), this model was developed by two American psychologists Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham in 1950. The model's name, Johari, is a combination of their both names.

The Johari window (Figure 1) describes two parts of us, the known and the unknown, divided into two axes, known by us and by others, which give us four windows:

First Window: The open area - what is known by us and others.

Second Window: The Unaware area – what is known by others, not by our self.

Third Window: The hidden area – what is known just for us.

Fourth Window: The unknown area – which is not known by us as well as by others.

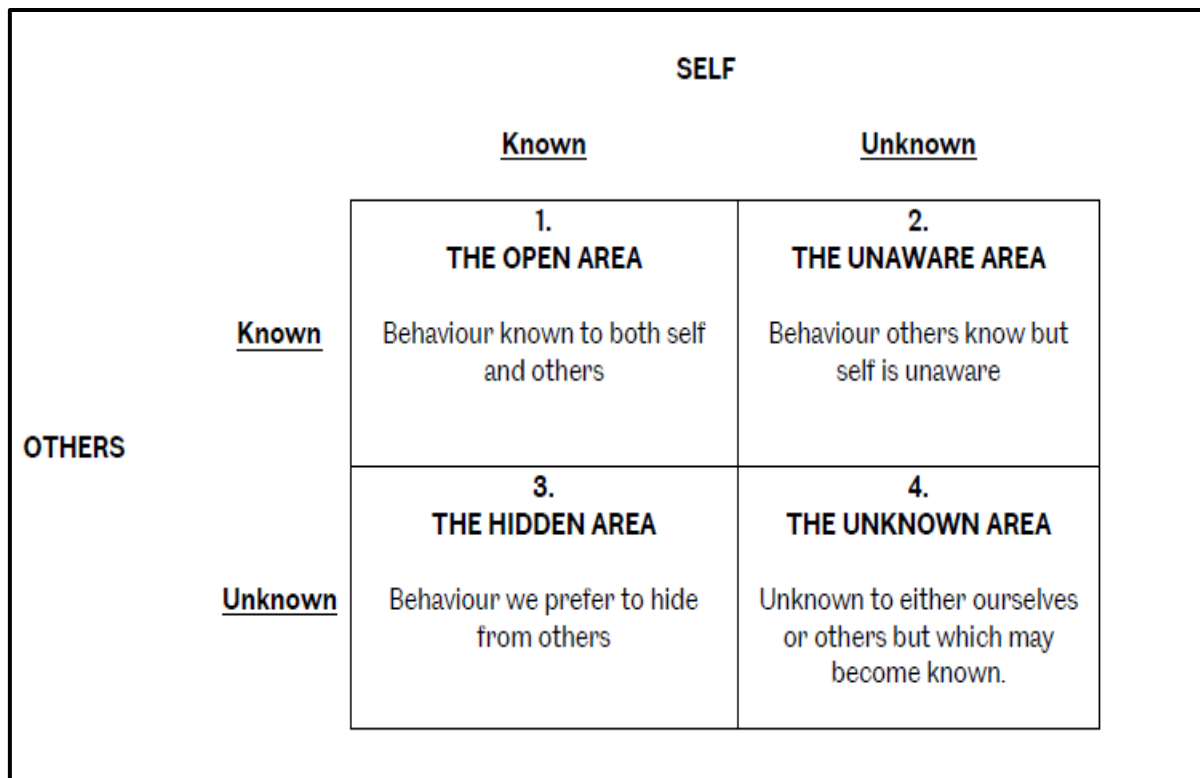


Figure 1 - Johari Window (UWTSD, 2019 - 2020).

I will base my self – awareness on the Johari Window.

The open area:

I am a friendly, open person, a dreamer, I like to help my friends, I am objective, organised. I do not like not meeting my objectives or plans or that someone hinder me in achieving them, I do not deal very well with changes and I do like a routine.

The unaware area:

For this one I had to ask some of my friend, and according to them I can be selfish sometimes and criticize them without noticing.

The hidden area:

The part of me that I have hidden is that occasionally I have a low level of self-confidence, self-motivation, especially when it comes to facing the unknown. I am very afraid that people will think I am stupid, so I am not much of an opinion, especially in matters that I am not sure.

The unknown area:

According with Luft and Ingham (1961), this area is related with part of our self that no one knows, even the person himself. It can be feelings, behaviours, attitudes etc., it may be helpful or not and does not mean that we do not have it, but it has not been explored yet. So, I do not have much to say about this area,

probably five to ten years from now, I will be aware the part of me that until now is unknown.

Career Development

I think is easier for me to explain, and for you to understand if I draw my lifeline, a technique that helps with the career reflection, which I had already learned in the first term of this module. It will contain the highs and lows moments in my career development, in which I will explain bellow.

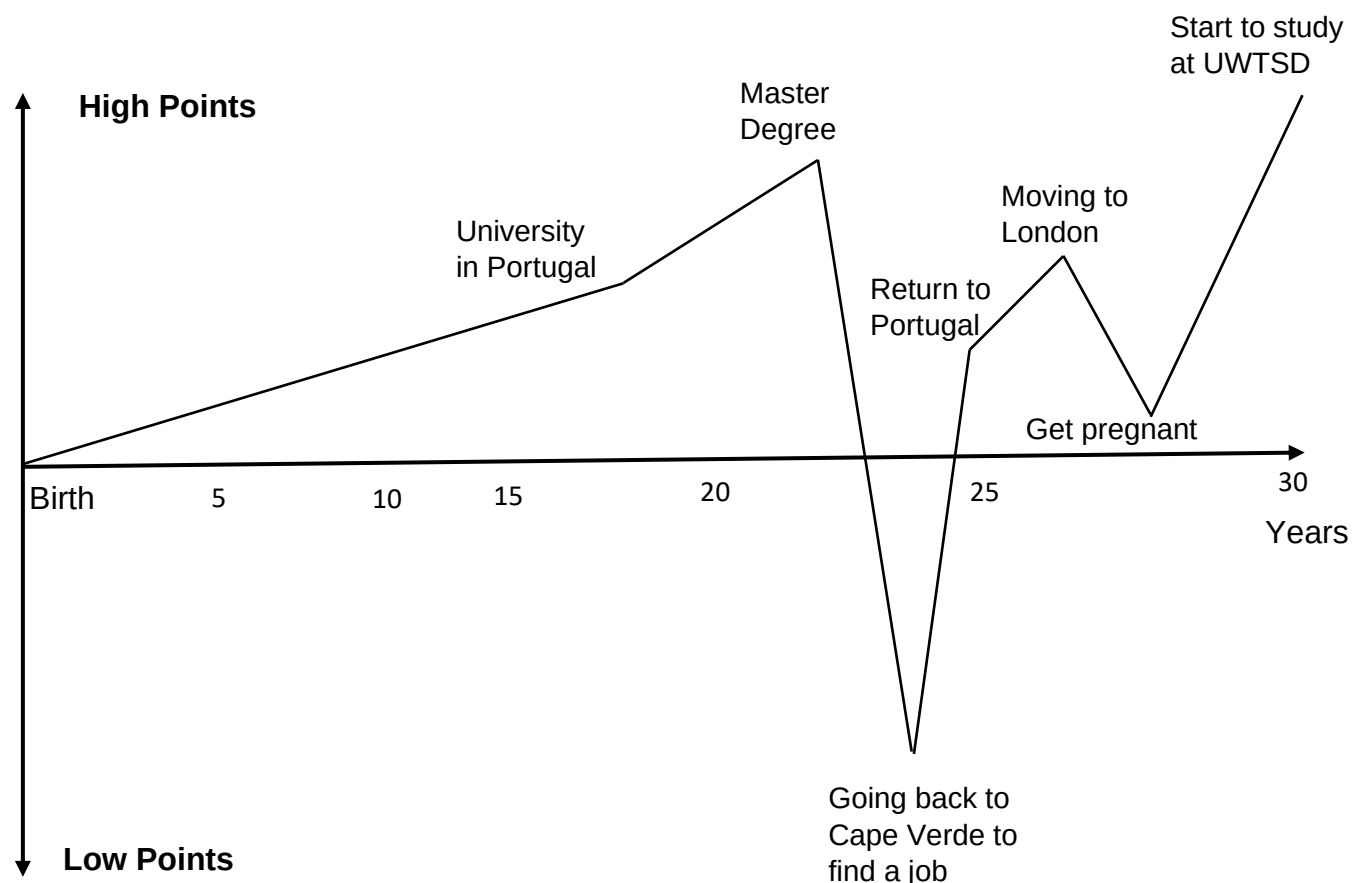


Figure 2 – My lifeline

I was born and grew up in Cape Verde, the first years of my life were just studying, from primary school to high school. At 17, when I finished high school, I got a place to join at a university in Portugal. Five years later, I finished my master's degree in environmental engineering. To finance my last years of study I had to work, I spent some time looking for a job and then, I found one in homecare.

When I finished the course, I decided to go to Cape Verde, look for a job based on my master's degree. Now I think it was the worst decision I had made. I spent almost a year there, between public contests, job interviews until I discovered

that the contests were just a formality and that the vacancy, even before the contest was open, was already occupied, and that find a proper job in that small country that lives on the basis of politics would be only with connections of influential people, which was not my case.

After almost a year in Cape Verde, I decided to return to Portugal, if I had to work in any area despite of, the one that I had studied, at least I would work in a country where the salary was better. At that time, I already had Portuguese nationality and it would be easier for me to find a good job. In Portugal I started to work in homecare, since I already had experience in that area. Occasionally I think that I chose to study environment engineer and the healthcare chose me.

It was never my dream to live in Portugal, even though I did not find a proper job in my country of origin, I had always wanted to live there, so I decided to invest more in my studies. The plan was to come to London, study English, do a postgraduation and return to Cape Verde.

I came to London in August 2016, as soon as I arrived, I started to work in a restaurant. I had almost no time and by the time I started to get used to my new life, I got pregnant. I will not say that this was a low point in my life, because being a mother allowed me to develop many skills, but it definitely delayed my plans.

With the pregnancy my plans to study were in the background, a baby takes all of our time. After my daughter was 19 months old, I turned my attention back to my initial plans. I started an English course, after I finished, I applied for a postgraduate degree in environmental engineering, which unfortunately I was not accepted, then I decided to seek help from a student assistant.

I found out, that to enter engineering I had to have a higher level of English, and that it would also not be possible to receive a student finance, and I would not be able to pay for my studies on my own. The lady who attended me said that she had a course that could interest me, Health and Social Care. As I already had experience, and it was an area that I liked, I decided to apply for this course and managed to enter.

Looking back, I always ask myself if I tried hard enough? Did I do everything I could to get a job in Cape Verde? Maybe I should not have gone to Cape Verde? Maybe I should have stayed there longer? Now it is hard to know, however I think I did everything I could in Cape Verde. I was unable to afford to stay there any longer, and I was unable to afford to undergo an unpaid internship.

Should I have tried to stay in Portugal? This may have been an option, but I never liked living there, so I decided to come to London and then return to Cape Verde when I finished my studies. After I had my daughter, I decided to stay here and I will do my best to get a job in my study area, which in this case are two now.

As already mentioned, I now have two areas of interest. I have already started sending curriculum vitae, for jobs application in both areas. The applications for the environmental area do not seem to be working, while those in healthcare, of the two that I have applied, I already got answers, and all of them scheduling

interviews. I think now I will focus more on this area, start working and finish my studies.

Skills and Knowledge

My last years were not just searching for a job based on my degree. I worked in a few areas like restaurant, housekeeping, but most of them in homecare. They may not have been the type of work that I had dreamed of, but they allowed me to develop myself, my skills and to gain more knowledge as well. My academic life has also contributed to my development.

According with Cambridge Dictionary (2020), the capability to accomplish an activity or a job well, is known as skill. During this course, I gained knowledge that there are several types of skills such as: academic, employability, interpersonal etc.

Academic skills - the skills that helps us on our academic path. There are a few of them that I have learned, some that I had a chance to develop, which has been helping me.

Employability Skills – the skills that helps us at work, that makes us employable (Gravells, 2010).

Interpersonal skills – the abilities that, for me, regardless of helping at school or at work, belongs to us, or rather that are part of your constitution. They help you in your daily life regardless of where you are or what you are doing.

All of them have been very useful to me all this year, however I will mention, those that have helped me the most.

Communication

According with (Maund, Schriek, and Tinkler, 2017), communication is the understanding between two or more individuals, resulting from the exchange of information, ideas, thoughts, feelings etc. Communication skills have helped me not only academically, but in all aspects of my life, especially at professional level. Among the skills pertaining to communication, the ones that have been helping me the most on this journey are:

Write and read skills – they are useful for all aspects of my life, but making a balance between my academic and professional life, I can say that they have been more useful in the academic.

Presentation skills - is one of the skills that have been helping me a lot in this academic world. According with Dolan (2017), this skill is very important not just academically, as well as professionally. However, for me it was very useful for my academic path, it was extremely useful for the presentation of my dissertation.

Listening Skills – effective listening means, understand the message sent, focusing not only on the verbal message, but also on the non-verbal ones (Maund, Schriek, and Tinkler, 2017). It is very important, because it allows not only to understand what is being said, but also what is hidden in the gestures, which often does not correspond to the first. Regardless of academic or professional life, this definitely have been important for all aspects of my life.

Specking and tone voice - for me, knowing what to say, when to say it and how to say it, is very important to maintain a good relationship between colleagues at work, at school and at home.

Empathy and Respect – like the two abilities described above, these two also have a fundamental role in the good relationship between people and as the two above, have been extremely helpful for me.

Paraphrasing and Summarising - the ability to say, and to make a brief summary, on my own words, what has already been said by other people, respectively. These two skills definitely helped me over the years, they are extremely important, due to the fact that are very useful for the academic works we have to do: dissertation, assignment, reports etc., they give them more credibility.

Time management - it is the ability to manage the time we have, in relation to the work we have to do. This ability is very important because it allow us to complete tasks on time, achieve goals, without causing stress to us or to others involved (Morgan, 2017). This ability helped me and has been helping me with my studies, especially in submitting my assignment on time, work and my personal life.

Critical thinking - Morgan (2017) says that critical thinking is the ability to develop and use information beyond memory and repetition. This skills for me is essential for learning, although I still have a lot to develop in this area, it has helped me on several issues during the past years.

Problem solving - it is not just the ability to solve problems, but to solve it efficiently, covering all variants from identifying and understanding the problem, to develop solutions and making decisions (Morgan, 2017). It is difficult to find someone who has never faced problems, whether small or big. This skill, like some others already described above, is very important.

Decision making - it is the ability to make good decisions. This ability is somewhat linked to the two above, problem solving and critical thinking. Normally, making good decisions requires critical thinking and good decisions lead to problem solving. As well as the two above it is also one of the skills that has been part of my life, however I do not seem to be very good at it.

Obviously, there are many more skills that have helped me all these years, however these are the ones that stood out the most, the ones I used the most.

SWOT analyses

A SWOT (S – strength, W – weakness, O – opportunities and T – threats) analyses is a strategy that allows to identify the strength, allowing the best use of these, the weakness, given the chances to improve them, the opportunities, so they can be explored and the treats, so they can be eliminate (Dyson, 2004).

Strength

It is quite complicated to talk about me, and it is even more difficult to identify qualities, defect among other characteristics that identify me. I am going to enumerate some skills that are my strength.

Time management skills – this is a skill that is definitely one of my strengths. Since I was a little girl, I always liked to manage my time according to the tasks I had to do. I like to set and achieve goals and to use my time efficiently. For example, if I have a task that requires a lot of time and little attention and another that requires little time and a lot of my attention, first I would start with the one that takes the longest, like cooking a dry bean, it requires a lot of time, but as soon as you start cooking the only thing to do is just control the amount of water after boiling until the beans cook. After I would move on to the one that takes the least time, like cooking rice for example.

Organisational Skills - I think that this ability is directly or indirectly linked to time management. To finish tasks on time you need to be at least a little organised and I always liked to have my things, tasks and my life organised.

Communication skills - Although my English (speaking and writing) still needs improvement, my communication in Portuguese has always been good. I worked very well with my colleagues, I am friendly, I always respected others and their opinions and I was always good at listening to the others problems.

Paraphrasing and summarising – all the academic works I have completed during all these years have helped me to improve these skills. I also think that it is due to the fact that I really enjoy reading, definitely it helps on improving these two skills.

Weakness

There are some skills in which I am not good at it. Below I am listing some of these skills.

Critical Thinking - I was never very good at critical thinking, it doesn't mean that I do not have anything, but it was always very complicated for me to disagree or even simply to question what was said to me by someone who has a higher position than mine, such as teachers. In relation to my colleagues I can sometimes disagree with them or question them at the beginning, however, I always end up letting go, or not being patient or not wanting to be rude.

Decision making and problem solving - as I already mention these two and critical thinking are connected, if you do not have a critical thinking, you will

certainly not be very good at making decisions and solving problems. It does not mean that I have never made a decision or solved a problem, but critical thinking helps in the analysis and evaluation of all points, and consequently lead to a good decision making and problem solving. For example, I was not happy on my previous job, they were cutting us, the employee's, hours even before this corona virus crises. So, I have decided to change job. However if I had thought it right, asked all the questions, that is, had a critical thinking, I would see that this was not the right time, and I was not at home now, without any payment because I delivered my resignation letter in the other job, and I have to wait until I receive adequate training to be able to start the new job I found.

Self-confidence skills - this is also one of the skills that needs my attention. I have low level of self-confidence. Occasionally I think I am afraid to take a step forward, precisely because I do not trust that I am capable enough to adapt with the new reality or with the new roles in my life.

It does not mean that I do not have other weakness, but the ones listed above are the ones that most hinder my development, and are also the ones that will take the longest to improve because they are part of me, of my psychological. The best way to improve them is to start to change my way of thinking, acting and mainly start to trust more in my abilities.

Improving these skills will be very beneficent for me, especially when it comes in finding a job. According with Stewart, Wall and Marciniiec (2016), employers want employees that have skills like communication, team work, problem solving, critical thinking, time management, leadership, etc., skills that can be easily transferable from classroom to workplace, and that skills can give a candidate an edge over the others. As mentioned, some of them like: time management, communication, in which is important for team working, I am good at it. However, it means that I do have to focus on my weakness.

Opportunities

I think I have had many opportunities in my life, the opportunity to go to university in Portugal, the opportunity to come to London, the opportunity to be a mother, the opportunity to start this course. With this course, I think I am getting another tool to improve myself and ensure a better future.

Threats

I think that the biggest threat that I faced and that I will face in this journey, it is me, my lack of confidence and my laziness.

Employment goals and Personal Development Plan (PDP)

According to the National Health Service (no date), PDP is a personal tool that allows the identification and attention to our personal, educational and

professional development needs, thus promoting our development and lifelong learning.

PDP is based on goals, and it also helps to achieve them, no matter if they are short term or long term goals. In this module we have learned a technique, SMART goals, that helps to evaluate and structure them.

SMART Goals Technique

According with the University of California (2016 – 2017), SMART Goals is a declaration of important results, containing the action plans to achieve them. According with the same ones: S stand for specific, M for measurable, A for achievable, R for relevant and T for time – bound.

Specific – is important to specify the goals, to be very specific on what you want.

Measurable - establish the metrics that will allows to know if the goal has been reached.

Achievable – how realistic is the goal? How important? And what is necessary to acquire and improve to achieve it.

Relevant – how important is the goal to you and does it match or make sense with your others goals?

Time – Bound - establishing a realistic time frame for each objective is important to stay focused and avoid frustration.

My specific objective is to open a senior care home in Cape Verde. Is my goal achievable? Yes, I always wanted to live in Cape Verde, but for now I have to stay here until my daughter completed her studies and became independent, so I think that 20 to 25 years will be enough to achieve my final goal. How to know if I have achieved my goal? The specific goal will require many actions plans, each step taken and each plan carried out will be to achieve the main objective, so it will not be measurable just for achieving the final goal, but achieving all the smalls objectives until the final one.

The next page contains my personal development plan, in which, I will present step by step all the actions to be taken, for example find a job in a care home, finish my studies in healthcare, do some course in business management, etc., and knowledge to acquire to achieve the goal. The main objective will take some years to be achieved, so I will focus and put my effort on complete de small tasks or goals on time.

Goals	Description	Skills and knowledge to acquire	Timing (start and finish dates)	Comments
Health care course and start to work as a carer in a senior care home.	I already started the course in Health and Social care, the main objective is to finish the course and at the same time find a part time job in a senior care home.	This will provide me more knowledge, experience and skills for the health care world and for working in a team.	Is a three year course and it started on October 2019, and will finish in 2022. The job is to be started in this month, May 2020.	For all this steps until reach the final one, I must be focus and motivated, and keep my mind on my final goal. After finish my studies and start to dedicate 100 percent on my job, I will start to save some money, that I will need to start the business.
Master degree in health care and get promoted to a supervisor.	To complement my health care degree with a Master degree, and at the same time to get promoted to a supervisor on my part time job at the senior care home.	In addition to the knowledge gained previously, here I will deepen the knowledge in healthcare, as a supervisor, working directly with the manager I will gain knowledge about the functioning of care home and the management of employees.	Master degree (when finish the bachelor degree, in 2022). Getting promotion after 2 to 3 years of work (2022 - 2023).	
Get promoted to a director and do a Course in Business Management.	After finish the master degree, Get promoted or find another job as a director in a senior care home. And start a course on business management.	This will allow me with more experience in how to manage a care home and staffs. Finding a job as a director in other care home will give me more knowledge in the care home world. A course in business management will provide me skills and knowledge in how to run a business.	After finish the master degree, and 2 - 3 years working as a supervisor, so probably in 2024. Start a business management part time course in 2025.	
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	After finish my course in business management, start to work as a CEO of a care home company.	This is the last step on my preparation and gaining knowledge to open my own senior care home in Cape Verde.	After 5 to 10 years' experience as a director, and for 5 years.	

Conclusion

A personal reflection is an essential tool for our development. It allows us to have more knowledge about ourselves, about our abilities and to evaluate our actions and learn from them. Self-reflection seems to be easy, I mean, it is about me right. However, it is one of the most difficult things I had to do.

Life takes us through several paths, so establishing a goal and making a development plan to achieve them is very important because it allows us to focus and work more and to move forward, otherwise it would be as if we were living just for living, without purpose.

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