Employability Skills

Learning in the Digital Era

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Reflection is considered a notion of a purposeful activity which allows an individual to analyse their experiences and skills in order to learn and make improvements (University of Birmingham, 2021). Reflection takes place every day in our day-to-day life whereby we take a moment to analyse a situation by asking ourselves why something had happened and whether the situation was handled well. Similarly, in academia, we are required to formalise our reflections in order to exhibit that learning is taking place.

During this course, numerous learning styles were introduced to reflect on our own academic practice. Based on my personal experience of learning a new skill in this course, I have attained to learn a variety of skills and improve my quality of life. The course has enabled me to learn skills such as referencing and paraphrasing, formal writing, learning theories and presentation skills. Gibbs (1988) created a reflective learning cycle that included the roles of feelings. This consisted of five steps, description, feeling, evaluation, analysis and action plan. According to University of Edinburgh (2022), Gibbs originally advocated its use in repeated situations, however, the stages and principles are applied equally well for single experiences. I have been able to apply the Gibbs cycle to my own account of learning through academia and personal experiences.

Utilising the notion of Gibbs' reflection cycle on a personal reflective situation, I have applied using Gibbs' recommended cycle. Recently, I and two other individuals were planning to open a business, however, we are required to create a business plan, and therefore, we worked as a team and divided the workload into three sections of the business plan between us. We hoped that we could piece together the section that was divided prior to submitting the plan before the deadline. However, it was apparent that the business plan was not written with a clear structure and therefore, it did not flow accordingly. Although, we had a great amount of time to carry out and write out our own individual tasks and research for the business plan, we were required to rewrite the sections to ensure it was a coherent piece of work. Due to the insufficient time for making any adjustments to the business plan prior to the deadline, I was required to cancel the plans I had with my family to go away for the weekend.

Prior to realising that the business plan required numerous adjustments, I felt quite relaxed and happy as I believed we were working ahead of time, and we distributed the workload equally, and therefore I felt the work was less strenuous. However, upon the realisation that the business plan was not a coherent piece of work and it required a lot of adjustments, I was extremely frustrated, especially when this affected my plans with my family. Moreover, the work became more strenuous as one of the individuals could not aid in adjusting the plan as he had a family emergency. However, as I wanted to make this business plan come to life, I was determined to make it work, and therefore, I had great motivation to adjust and rewrite the business plan. Furthermore, due to my family being away for the weekend without me, I worked harder and more efficiently to complete the plan. Reminiscing the situation, I remember feeling satisfied and relieved that the hard work had paid off.

Evaluating the situation, one of the positive factors that were exhibited during the planning of our business plan was that each member produced quality and sufficient amount of work for the agreed deadline. Therefore, this indicated that each member was hardworking, reliable and took responsibility for what they were assigned, thus, making great teamwork. The negative factor would be the assumption that we all thought we had the same writing style, which clearly failed and therefore, our time management was impacted.

Analysing the situation, the initial division of work between us was great as each individual had a part to play. As partners in a new business, we all felt that we were all equal partners with equal responsibilities. Furthermore, the tasks were divided according to each self-identified strength which allowed us to work alone whilst enjoying the area that is equivalent to our strength.

In hindsight, I assumed that dividing the task and bringing it all together, in the end, would have saved us time. However, in reality, this was far more time consuming and caused us further stress as we were required to rush through the rewriting. I believe that the lack of planning on structuring the business plan as a whole may have led us to this situation. Although the work was delegated to self identified strengths, we should have considered each individuals weaknesses. Fisher (2011) noted that in the Belbin's team role, they suggested that every member in a group exhibit strengths and weaknesses.

In conclusion, I learned that when distributing tasks, we must communicate on how we want to structure the plan to exhibit. Therefore, summarising the situation and highlighting the positive and negative factors, I believe if we had addressed this from the start, it would have alleviated us from rewriting and making so many changes to the business plan. Nonetheless, dividing the work accordingly to each person's self-identified strength aided us to produce good quality work with valuable information.

As part of an action plan, should the situation arise again, I will communicate what strengths they are equipped with and talk to them about their weaknesses and how we can prevent our weaknesses from creating hurdles. I believe with further communication and creating time to have up to date drafts presented to one another can help us in advance to pick up any inconsistencies. This situation has allowed me to have prior knowledge and skills in delegating work and time management. Therefore, I will be able to reflect on this experience to avoid quickly forgetting as Gibbs stated "It is not sufficient to have an experience in order to learn. Without reflecting on this experience, it may quickly be forgotten, or its learning potential lost." (Gibbs, 1988, p9). Furthermore, although self identified strength is good knowledge to present to the group, we should also challenge them on their weaknesses. Even if prodding on someone's weaknesses can feel uncomfortable, remembering that we want the best result and outcome these feelings will subside.

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