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Introduction

As a student, it is primordial to possess a few academic skills, which can be developed over time and impact one's future, career prospects, and even personality. Discovering skills that may help students in their learning process is a matter investigated by many researchers and still lack data in certain areas. The main reason for the research is the need to improve education and abilities among individuals. One of the main issues in academic performance is the fact that students do not spend as much time studying as recommended. This can lead to uninformed students and a lack of achievements. Students should be able to choose their personalised model of learning, one that can enhance their skills and motivation but also helps them to ease the process.

During this module, I have attained many new skills, and the information received during class has been properly assimilated. This has been possible for a few reasons, such as spending as much time as possible researching and evaluating the topics. Also, the information has been given clearly, which has helped the easy processing and gaining more knowledge.

It is common for individuals to forget things. However, students should find methods of saving all information, as much of it can be irreplaceable. Activities such as making notes, using registering devices, and other technologies can positively impact attaining data for students that have a busy outside life as well. Having the ability of self-reflection can influence the ways of learning, as this allows students to understand their work, mistakes, and achievements and help them in developing a professional identity.

Kolb's Learning Model

I have chosen to use Kolb's learning model as a reflective method that has been developed back in 1984. The model proposed a straightforward framework composed of four main areas. The first one is the experience, where the student is reflecting on a subject that will later become academic material. The experience can be an event, a feeling, or even a thought that developed in one's mind and can be evaluated and analysed from many different perspectives. The second is reflection, which includes steps like understanding successes, failures, and actions to impact the experience. Then conceptualisation follows, and this area looks after insights and more profound knowledge that can be related to the experience. During this process, students understand what has been hidden until then and apply external knowledge to the subject from previous studies and public data. The last area to be discussed is the application of reflection and conceptualisation on the field and themselves.

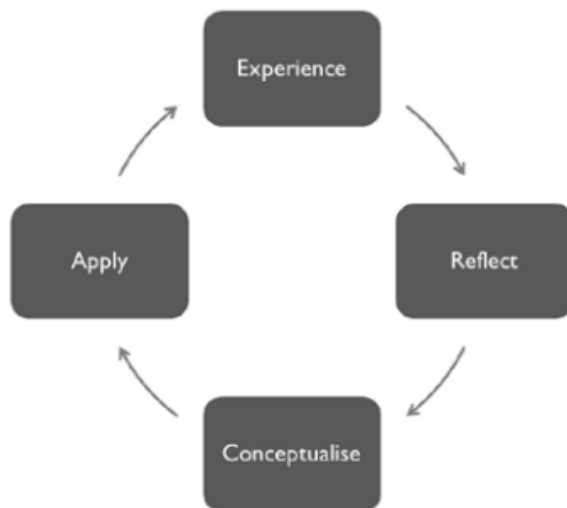


Figure 1. Learning Model (Kolb, 1984).

According to Kolb (1984), students will more likely test new approaches in specific contexts after they have attained all the information and skills. Reflective thinking and writing are focused mainly on self-development, and students develop at many different levels while in education. Obtaining data from external sources can benefit students, but they must also look into themselves to achieve their goals.

Academic Writing

Academic writing can be a very difficult skill to master, especially in the first years of higher education. Pupils are taught to write in schools; however, the writing level differs from what is recommended in the academic and professional environment later in life.

According to Lloyd (2007), academic writing comprises a set of skills. Many students agree that writing in an academic format can be very challenging even after a few years of intensive study. A vast part of the population agrees that it is very common for them not to understand academic writing and notions, as it is too formal or the field is unknown.

The skills described by Lloyd (2007) are planning, referencing, organisation, composition, engineering, spelling, and structure. Planning involves creating a time frame for the work to be completed, or at least having a plan built in order to create order in activities. This is often seen as good time management in the professional world and is very appreciated by others. Referencing is not only a list with literature dropped at the end of the paper for informative reasons. Citations have to be clearly and appropriately added to the text. The organisation is used as a safe way towards fast results, as organised students tend to attain information much more effortlessly than unorganised peers. Having all the resources at hand can be very important when dealing with deadlines or other forms of pressure. The fourth important skill in academic writing is composition, and this is the first step in compiling all the information into one big assembly of thoughts. During the next step, proper sentences and paragraphs are created. Engineering is the creation of the paper, or more specifically – the first draft. Once all the data is gathered, students can start writing and putting together thoughts and ideas that will have a deeper understanding later. This is when the spelling is applied to any type of work. Grammar and punctuation are essential in the academic environment, and papers must be submitted in the best format possible. The purpose of spelling is to ensure the work's formality and the readers' understanding. The last step is to build a proper structure and format for the work. The way work is presented can influence its outcome and can also impact the audience. Therefore, academic writing must include required subheadings, should align paragraphs in specific ways, and make use of certain sources accordingly.

I am well aware that this skill will come to me in time if I invest enough time in my educational purposes; however, at this point, I understand that there is a lot of work to be done yet.

Using the Library and Gathering Information

Todd and Kuhlthau (2005) stated that libraries contribute to the social good, and this is done by facilitating a knowledgeable society and well-being and encouraging decision-making in individuals. When people have a wide choice of information, they have the freedom to choose their beliefs and ideas and not follow the ideologies of others. This phenomenon hasn't always been accessible to everyone, and many societies have seen a lack of development due to information being prohibited to them. The lack of information can lead to many national issues, including poverty and unemployment.

The use of libraries is free in the United Kingdom, and people from all backgrounds have access to data if they choose to inform themselves. Students are encouraged to use the material offered by libraries, public or private. Technology had a very positive impact on academic life, as most universities provide online library services to students, and they have access to all the data available to the university from their homes. Still, the use of the library has been a challenge for me at the beginning, as the amount of sources is very wide, and often the information needed is covered in many pieces of work. Creating a proper structure for a report or an essay can prove to be more difficult than expected. I had to improve my research skills to provide reliable and valid information.

In a study conducted by Abbo (2000), it has been discovered that 90 percent of people that use libraries have access to the internet, and the access hasn't stopped them from visiting public libraries. However, twenty-two years later, the context for the study most likely will have a different outcome. In 2021, the number of people visiting public libraries dropped by 159 million in the UK only, as many branches have been shut during the COVID-19 pandemic, but web use increased by 18 percent (The Guardian, 2021). These figures show that libraries have a significant impact on the population even two decades later. Personally, I feel that libraries have a particular role in society, and this has been the case for thousands of years. Many important historical figures mentioned the importance of literature and cited others before them. I believe previous work will always influence present and future research and studies.

Time Management

Time management is a well-known issue among students of all types of education. This skill can be very hard to achieve, especially when it comes to people that are not necessarily very organised in general. Time is usually seen as indefinite and more like a commodity than a necessity, and often people do not understand its importance. In the academic environment, time is of the essence, as university and college students have to deal with many more aspects of life than pupils do in schools. This is why time management has to be a skill learned in the early years, leading to a smoother transition towards adult life. This statement is undoubtedly opposed often by researchers that promote more freedom during childhood.

According to Escobar (2015), good time management often leads to higher achievements and better performance in students. She states that students should possess skills such as the ability to set goals and priorities and organisational ones.

When organising work, I tend to prioritise small pieces in front of the big tasks. This makes it easier for me to set up deadlines for each of them and have specific terms for achieving them. Time management for me is a primordial step as this helps in attaining the goals in a certain timeframe and with a particular quality, similar to a project. Depending on how is seen from the outside, time management can have many benefits for students, such as stress relief, saving extra time for other activities, or good decision making. Often people trying too hard to save time, lose more on trying. Students should know to prioritise tasks correctly in a way that suits them best.

Public Speaking and Giving Presentations

Public speaking refers to a person that prepares for and talks in front of an audience. According to Jaffe (2016), the skill of confident public speaking is highly influenced by one's culture and upbringing. People are designed by their culture and by society from a sociological perspective, and their actions often align with their culture, religion, beliefs, and values. For instance, a person that has grown up in a non-expressive culture might find it very difficult to express themselves in front of even small audiences, while those coming from a collectivist culture can only be comfortable with specific groups of people.

One of the main barriers I have noticed during my own experience is the language barrier in communication and public speaking. Preparing a presentation for the classroom and the lecturer has proven to be very comfortable in comparison with presenting it. Students often encounter anxiety and worries during presentations and speeches, and it has been reported that many students feel more confident when they are fully prepared for the task. As mentioned above, not being a native English speaker can cause issues in my expression and can increase my anxiety about not performing well enough.

With these being said, preparing the presentation and the paper made me understand the importance of good feedback and how this can be applied in the academic environment for my improvements and achievements.

Conclusion

After conducting some research and evaluating multiple sources of information, it can be concluded that students must possess specific skills in order to have high achievements and this statement is supported by many experts (Skinner and Dally, 2010; Erling and Richardson, 2010).

Over the last decade, technology in all fields has improved drastically, and more methods and strategies have been developed in the educational field. Students nowadays have the best opportunities to learn than ever before and allowing enough time for education can improve the well-being of the entire society.

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