

Reflective Evaluation

Name: Alina Georgiana Donegan

Student Number: 1908763

Module Title: Community Engagement

Lecturer's Name: Tanja Nathan

Date: 5th/Jan/2020

Introduction:

This Reflective Report shows a brief of what my life looked like before I started University, what I have experienced so far, things that I have learned in this first semester, the person I have become after, plus my goals and aspirations as a student towards the future.

Description:

After putting on hold my career for a couple of years, due to my son being diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), which needed my full attention and dedication, I have decided to take the opportunity to do something for myself and became a student at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David in London.

I have chosen the Business and Management course with the thoughts of gaining more knowledge and skills on how to improve my previous career, hoping to move towards a promotion. Looking at everything in the big picture and saw myself having my own business. I also really enjoy being in a collective environment, and that is exactly what I needed for my well being.

I was a beauty therapist working in beauty salons, as well as independent, in Bucharest. After moving to London, I started working for one of the biggest cosmetic companies in the world, Clinique, as a beauty consultant. My goal is to finish my studies then apply for a business manager position at Clinique, get enough field experience to use it towards my future business plan.

I have realised that what I thought being a student would be like, was completely different when I started, much more intense and stressful. The realisation came when the expectations were high in such short time, and could not manage my time properly. Preparing and delivering my first presentation ever, for the Community Engagement module, demonstrating role play, using an example from my previous experience as a beauty consultant at Clinique with a customer which gave me more anxiety than I thought it would, especially when I knew I had to deliver everything on time, and I almost did not get to finish it. I know it was not perfect, but I really enjoyed it and I have learned a lot from it. One of the most difficult parts I found was working in a group with other people, doing a project and a presentation together. It was quite challenging and I have realised that not everyone was as involved and dedicated. I got nominated as the group representative, and for some reason everyone held me responsible for everything. We have made a plan, but no one would do anything to put it in action. I have ended up staying awake really late at night, to come up with more productive ideas, and start working on it.

Feelings:

Finding out about my son's condition was the most difficult thing to overcome and accept. It felt like my whole world fell apart. Leaving my job, among other sacrifices, was not easy at all, but I knew it was the right decision at the time.

After a few years of having no social life, and not being able to do anything for myself, I have lost self confidence which made me have doubts about my decision on becoming a student. I had fear of failure, and with one day before my admission exam and interview I have panicked and thought about not going further with my plan. I have managed to overcome those feelings and gave it a try anyway, going in the next day with no expectations.

I was so happy that I have passed my exam and interview that somehow my self confidence came back, like I have never lost it. I felt so happy I have made this change in my life.

When I finally started University it felt good, like I was myself once again. I really liked everyone in my group and I thought we connected really well. The teachers were also really nice, and this made me feel comfortable really quickly. As a result of this, I really enjoy being active in the class, and I definitely feel that I am improving my knowledge all the time.

When the time for the assignments and presentations came, then I have realised that because of my poor time management I struggled doing my work. Once again, I had panicked.

Everything was also brand new to me, and not being exposed to an academic environment for a long time, made me feel extremely overwhelmed.

I have struggled a little bit with my first role-play-presentation for the Community Engagement, purely based on the unknown expectations, afraid of disappointing and not finishing on time.

The most challenging of all was the group work assignment and presentation for the Academic Skills module. I have felt that most of the responsibility was left on me, just because I was nominated to be the group representative. Everyone was looking at me for every answer or question, and it made me feel extremely pressured and stressed.

Due to the lack of involvement and communication, our group presentation was not at the given standards and rather embarrassing, especially after being criticised by the examiners for missing a lot of things in our presentation, leaving me with a mix of a lot of feelings. I felt anger, disappointment, embarrassment, and that all the hard work I have invested was down that drain. I knew it could have been so much better if all of us put in the same amount of effort.

Later on, after calming down, I have realised that in life you get surrounded by users, and I should not be so harsh on myself, I know I have done everything I could.

Evaluation:

Looking back at everything I have done, I have no regrets about the decisions I have made, in fact I feel very proud of my son's improvements with his therapy and I know it is the result of my determination and hard work.

As it stands, I am still working on a lot of skills and trying my best to be a better student and overcome all my fears. One of the highlights was my first presentation, as that 'broke the ice' for me. It helped me gain some of my confidence back, also having a supportive teacher helps.

After our group presentation was over, it took me a while to calm down. It seemed like I was the only one panicking and trying to fix it. In fact, some of the group members told me that they are happy with the presentation and they do not care about the consequences.

After I took several deep breaths, I was analysing the situation better, and did not want this to be their final decision about us, so I went over to one of the examiners and asked his input in regards to our presentation. What could we do to improve it before we submit it. I have made notes, went home and changed my attitude. I gave everyone in the group a responsibility and a deadline to change our whole presentation, and I stayed awake until 3:00am that day to finish it.

I have learned in life, through experiences, that determination is the key to success.

The good part about this whole experience was that this is how we learn, from our mistakes. I see myself as a newborn in this whole situation, taking baby steps towards success. I am positive that our next semester will be a much more successful one.

Analysis:

Keeping my job, it would have helped me achieve my development in my career faster, instead I have prioritised my son, as his achievements mean so much more to me at this moment, and it is crucial that I give him the best I can at this early stage of his life and condition. Life experience has made me realise the principle of living a long, healthy, and happy life, full of love, and with no regrets, until our last breath (Stefanie Schroeder, Stephanie Schmid, Alexandra Martin, Aida Buhic-Bergner, Michael Linden, Claus Vögele, Claus Bischoff, Stefan Schmädke, Melanie Adam, Corinna Dreher, Daniel Bencetic, Klaus Limbacher, Anna M Ehret, Matthias Berking, Wolfgang Briegel, Ann-Katrin Job, Kurt Hahlweg, 2013), it is an important reflection on myself and my family.

Looking back where I was a few months ago, having my confidence lost and underestimating myself, now I have left my first semester much more confident and gained very useful skills.

In regards to my role play presentation, what could have helped is not leaving it until the last minute, to avoid panic and reduce the stress. As my peer (Dimitrina Petrova, 2019) stated in her feedback form, attached to the appendices of this assignment, I did not show signs of stress, I looked confident and I had good body language. Enhancing your ability to speak in front of an audience is one of the greatest benefits that one can achieve through time (Abhishek David John, M Arthi, 2016).

About my group presentation, communicating more, expressing my feelings to the group members, telling them how stressed I was and how they need to get more involved, it would have helped.

Instead I took pretty much the whole responsibility, with the idea of having a successful presentation, and that did not work out well either. Also, I expressed my frustrations towards my colleagues a lot worse afterwards, which I did not feel good about.

When I went to take advice from one of the lecturers, most of my group members stood back and did not get involved in the conversation. Instead they could have all been there showing interest to improve. Then is when I realised that things have to change in the future and leadership is something that can be developed (Williams M, 2005).

The examiners also did not help our situation at all, as they changed the rules in the last minute, which made us panic even more, and there is nothing I could have done in that situation, at the same time I was appreciative of the second chance we were given to improve our presentation before the deadline.

Conclusion:

Before I had my son, I had no idea what is around the corner for me, and no one warned me about all the challenges I was about to meet. I was a completely different person than I am today. What does not kill you makes you stronger (Gizem Erdem, Natasha Slesnick, 2010). I would have not have done anything differently if I had to do it all over again.

A few months ago, I had no idea that I would be able to do everything I have done so far since I have started University, and I am very grateful for it.

In retrospect, many things could have been done differently since I have started University.

I should have managed my time much more efficiently and effectively, in order to allow myself more time to study, do my homework without stress, and take care of my family at the same time.

I can definitely do better on my next role play presentation, now I know what the expectations are, and by working on my weaknesses.

As for the group presentation, I should have given the group members individual tasks to each one of them, and set up a much quicker deadline, not leave it to the actual deadline given to us by our lecturer. Set fair rules and stick to them (Bernard A Mitchell, 1994). Something else I should have done is use a different way of communicating with the group, for example via the university's email.

This advice was given by one of our lecturers, and I intend to consider using it in the future. This whole experience had taught me that we do learn through our mistakes, and the best way to learn is

to be hit by them. So, in the end I should be grateful for all those who gave me a hard time, they taught me a great lesson.

Action Plan:

My main goal as a parent is to see my child achieve his best abilities, and help him integrate into society. I also want him to look up to me and feel proud of what I am trying to do.

For the next term at University, I will make sure that all the mistakes I have made in the first term are worth it. My focus will be to improve my time management over all, gain more communication and leadership skills. This will help me deal better with the future group projects, not only that, it also teaches me how to become a good manager.

I will also ask more questions in the class, in regards to what is needed for future projects, and ask the lecturers to give us each a copy of the whole plan. This way there will be no room for misunderstanding.

This whole experience overall has definitely helped me immensely, and I have started 2020 much more knowledgeable.

Conclusion:

In the conclusion of this report, all I can say is, I have no regrets for how things turned out in the end, I know this is just the beginning of my journey as a student, and I will embrace every single lesson, even if it has to be learned the hard way.

I am looking forward to the next semester!

References:

Abhishek David John, M Arthi, International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Literature 4 (4), 9-12, 2016

Bernard A Mitchell, American School Board Journal 181 (12), 32-33, 1994

Dimitrina Petrova, 2019

Williams, M. (2005), Leadership for leaders. London: Thorogood Publishing Limited.

Stefanie Schroeder, Stephanie Schmid, Alexandra Martin, Aida Buhić-Bergner, Michael Linden, Claus Vögele, Claus Bischoff, Stefan Schmädeke, Melanie Adam, Corinna Dreher, Daniel Bencetic, Klaus Limbacher, Anna M Ehret, Matthias Berking, Wolfgang Briegel, Ann-Katrin Job, Kurt Hahlweg, Verhaltenstherapie 23 (4), 287-289, 2013

Appendices:

LCBB 4002 Community Engagement

Peer Evaluation Role Play Feedback Form

Name of Presenter *Alina GEORGIANA* Date *11/12/19*

Activity: *Beauty consultant - Clinique*

	Poor	OK	Good	Excellent	
1. Introduction (Explanation)	<i>✓</i>			<i>✓</i>	<i>short briefed.</i>
2. Presentation (practical demonstration)				<i>✓</i>	<i>good body language, not stress signs</i>
3. Conclusion (how well can you carry out the activity?)				<i>✓</i>	<i>happy solution, very good cust. service.</i>

Any other comments

- ① *very good introduction, very confident start delivered the message in professional manner. Giving example from her own experience.*
- ② *Q where were the earnings from? knowledge about the services she offered.*
- ③ *Follow up → call → very impressive.*

Signed: *D. Petrova*

Date: *11/12/2019*

[Signature]