

Professional Career Development

(BMSW4012)

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Personal Reflection

1. Description

My career journey has been shaped by survival rather than professional development. Throughout my life, financial instability, food insecurity, and unstable employment created a pattern where work was not about growth, but about coping. Many of the

jobs I held were short-term, physically demanding, and required little mental engagement. As I grew older, my physical strength declined, making it harder to sustain the demanding work that once kept me afloat. Eventually, homelessness and social vulnerability became part of my reality until social workers intervened and offered support. Now, at 56, I am studying and trying to rebuild my life, but the contrast between my past and the academic world often feels overwhelming.

2. Feelings

Reflecting on my past evokes deep sadness, frustration, and a desire to erase painful memories. I often feel inadequate when comparing myself to younger, confident, multilingual students who appear well-prepared for modern society. Academic language sometimes feels like a mask that hides real struggles, and I worry that my past mistakes overshadow my present efforts. At times, I feel ashamed of my spelling, my physical limitations, and the hardships I endured. Yet, there is also a part of me that recognises resilience, the ability to survive, adapt, and continue learning despite adversity. These mixed emotions make reflection difficult but also meaningful.

3. Evaluation

It is easy to conclude that “nothing worked well” in my career. Many jobs were unstable, poorly paid, or physically exhausting. My survival skills developed out of necessity, not choice, and I often felt stuck in roles that did not allow personal growth. However, there were positive aspects: I learned resilience, adaptability, and the ability to navigate hardship. I developed practical skills, resourcefulness, and empathy for others in need. Access to food banks, community support, and social services helped me survive difficult periods. More recently, opportunities to study, receive bursaries, and invest in myself show that progress is possible. Although my past career did not provide stability, it taught me endurance and humility.

4. Analysis

My experiences highlight how social systems, economic inequality, and educational barriers shape career outcomes. People who grow up with limited resources often enter cycles of survival work, while those with academic privilege appear to advance more easily. This can create feelings of inferiority and reinforce the belief that academic individuals are “better” than non-academic ones. Career theories such as Holland’s model or personality tests like Myers-Briggs attempt to categorise people,

but they cannot fully capture the complexity of human experience, especially when life circumstances drastically change over time. My reflection shows that career development is not linear; it is influenced by environment, opportunity, health, and support systems. Despite the challenges, I am now learning to question assumptions, think critically, and recognise that personal growth is still possible.

5. Conclusion

Although I feel disappointed with my past career, this reflection helps me see that my experiences do not define my future. My spelling, mistakes, and hardships are not indicators of my worth. Personal branding and identity are not fixed; they evolve as people grow, learn, and adapt. Even individuals with great talent or high qualifications face personal struggles, proving that no one's path is perfect. My past may be painful, but it does not determine what I can achieve now. I am beginning to understand myself better, and this awareness is the foundation for change.

6. Action Plan

Moving forward, I will apply the methods and learning strategies introduced in my academic studies. I will:

- Continue developing my education and digital skills.
- Build a Personal Development Plan (PDP) to set clear goals.
- Work toward completing my driving licence.
- Strengthen healthy relationships and supportive networks.
- Practice resilience and positive thinking during setbacks.
- Improve my writing skills through consistent practice.
- Focus on self acceptance and avoid letting past experiences limit my future.

I aim to create a future defined not by survival, but by growth. I will embrace learning, question assumptions, and use my empathy and kindness to contribute meaningfully to others. My journey is still unfolding, and I am committed to moving forward with courage and purpose.

Dialogue for the Future

MY JOURNAL OF INSPIRATION

