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MODULE NAME: MANAGING ENTERPRISE IN THE 21ST CENTURY
(BMSK4006)

TERM 2

TASK: Produce a reflective report of 2,000 words, which demonstrates an awareness of the learning journey they have undertaken during the team business plan interactions. They should also reflect upon the development of their personal skill set for self-employment.

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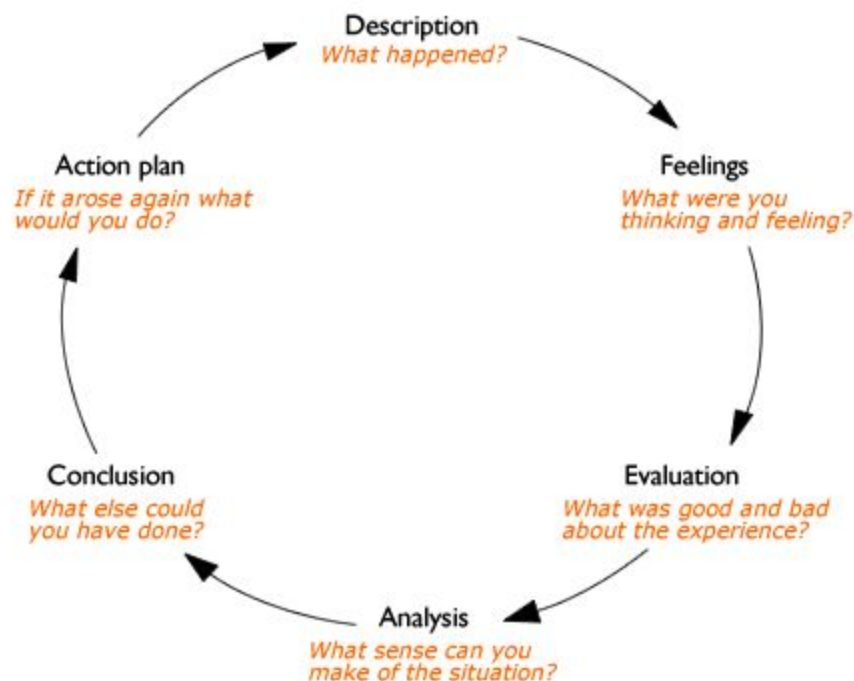
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INTRODUCTION

Goddin (2008) started his best selling book 'Tribes' with this statement, "A tribe is a group of people connected to one another, connected to an idea and a leader, exploring ways to communicate their shared interest".

This is a reflective report of my experiences during the Business plan teamwork showcasing the skills developed for my self employment. My tribe was my team of 3 people, coming together for the combined purpose of producing and presenting a business plan at the end of our first term of the module. It was an interesting journey to say the least for reasons you will find out in this report. I will be applying the Gibbs reflective cycle as illustrated below, to share my experiences in this report.



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Gibbs (1988) reflective cycle showing my reflection over the business plan exercise. (Oxford Polytechnic, 2019)

I explore the different feelings I had over the period of forming our team to the storming stage where there was little or no conflict so we were able to reach the norming stage quite early on. Everyone was given clear roles to play which we did by utilizing our skills to make the performing stage not as daunting as other groups felt. Thereby, the adjourning stage was fruitful, going away with new skills and lessons learnt.

I will also be evaluating the positives versus the negatives of how I perceived the whole journey by my interpretations. You will learn about my thinking, my assumptions and how all of it has influenced my self employment future.

MY EXPERIENCE

It was the second week of the beginning of the first term on this course 'Managing Enterprise in the 21st Century'. We were meeting our lecturer for the first time because she did not turn up for the first week of lectures. We were informed on the day by email that she had been taken ill hence her absence. By the second week, I was ready to engage and find out what this particular module would reveal for the simple reason that I look forward to starting my own business enterprise and I was curious about the content of the module.

Our lecturer introduced herself and the module name and immediately informed us that we needed to get ourselves into teams for presenting a business plan. Nothing had prepared me for this piece of news as I had not taken a look at the weekly content for this particular module. Looking around at my fellow students, I realised my feelings was shared by almost all, if not all of us. Thoughts running through my mind was "I do not know these people enough to determine who I would like to be in my team".

We had to get into teams of between three to five members, brainstorm a business idea and start planning our business plan. These were the instructions from our lecturer which seemed rather hasty to me. My team came together from the order of where we sat in class. There were two men sitting ahead of us two women so the four of us decided to form a team. Our team became a three member team eventually because one of us dropped out of the University at about the third week. We virtually spent the whole of that lesson listening to our lecturer inform us about the business plan, write our names down on a sheet of paper in our teams and start to share ideas about our business.

At this point during the first week in some of the other classes, we had introduced ourselves as we did not really know much about others, so the four of us went about getting to know each other by finding out what we did for a living. This was where the idea of writing a business plan for a Construction company came up. The two men in my team named Adrian and Valeriu were both working for a construction company and I immediately suggested we should choose Construction out of a list of about ten suggestion we had written down. My group members all agreed with me after I explained that by choosing this, we would probably be different from others as it was most unlikely any other group would come up with the same idea. I agree with Goddin (2008) when he pointed out that others are always ready to follow when they realise you are ready to lead and you show it. Also, Adrian and Valeriu already work in the construction company so we should be able to gain first hand knowledge about setting up our company, writing and presenting a business plan in a few weeks. I was chosen to be the team leader almost immediately and by the end of the lesson and I had given each member sub-topics to research by the next lesson.

As teams are typically built for the purpose of bringing different skills and expertise together so that a problem can be solved or a project developed (Morgan P, 2017). We would come to realise our strengths and

weaknesses in this project as the weeks progressed towards the presentation day. This was the forming stage of Tuckman's Team model.



Fig 2: Team Development stages

(bing.com)

I began to research about Construction companies, what it takes to set them up and decided through my research that it would have to be a 'limited company' as that would not require a big capital. I discussed this point with my team during one of our meet-up after lectures and everyone agreed because we felt we would be able to justify the finance we plan to borrow from the banks in our business plan. The other team members also worked on having face-to-face discussions with their employers (as they both worked in construction), picking their brains for first hand information.

As the team leader, my research was mainly to prepare the Executive summary, the company logo and also worked on the swot analysis. Our product and services was a joint effort. Adrian researched our marketing strategy whilst Valerie worked on Management structure and Financial Plan. Once we had all our information, Adrian being very skilled with putting powerpoints together, was efficient in producing our business plan on powerpoint.

MY FEELINGS

It is slightly difficult to remember all of my feelings because nothing was journaled during the journey I had throughout the course. I will however try and put into words as much as I can remember. How I wished we were informed or hinted that we would have to write a reflective report about our business plan as our module task in the second term of our course.

I remember feeling slightly panicked and at the same time amused by the rollercoaster of events during that first lesson. The realisation that I would have to work closely and as part of a team with people I have only just met seemed ridiculous at first. However, The more I thought about the fact that it had to be done and we had to produce and present our business plan in a few weeks, brought out the leadership skills in me. According to Brown (2018), "The foundational skill of courage-building is the willingness and ability to rumble with vulnerability". I felt vulnerable, however kicked into action in my head and practically as well by joining up with those seated close to me to form our team. Afterall, majority of us had not met before the course brought us all together. What a way of getting to know each other better, learning about our skill set strengths and weaknesses and finding out what we can learn from each other.

As the discussions during our meetings to build our business plan took place (normally after lectures on Mondays and Thursdays of every week), I remember feeling progressively confident that our business plan was coming together very well. I felt that it was a gamble to choose the Construction company that I knew nothing about but rest assured that two members of my team were in the business and with my research abilities, we would succeed in putting forward a great presentation. This feeling was further reinforced when one of my team mate (Adriene) volunteered to put together our power-point for the presentation because he was very good at it. I had been unsure about that aspect as I recognised that my skill-set on powerpoint was not great. I can remember as we neared our presentation

week that each one of us had worked hard in our roles, strengthening the other where they lacked and encouraging when it was needed.

EVALUATION OF MY EXPERIENCE

There were a lot of positives in my experience of my journey through the business plan presentation. I believe that it got me out of my comfort zone into tasking myself and facing the task of learning through research and some of the lectures, the intricacies of a business plan and the importance in preparation for self-employment. None of us had any experience of writing a business plan before, given that I was once a business owner. The fact is, I did not have a business plan before starting my 'Eatery' a few years ago, and on hindsight, one of the reasons the business failed after two years of hard work.

I believe also that the books we were all given at the beginning of our course were advantageous as research materials because one of them contained guides to writing and pitching a business plan. As (Maund et al, 2017) suggested, once we have gathered all our content (business name, description, marketing strategy, swot analysis, product and services, financial plan, and management structure), we could then proceed with assembling all of these in logical order. This we were able to do successfully from the comments we received from our lecturer after our team's presentation. I particularly received very favourable comments regarding the contents of my part and my pitch.

On the other hand as the weeks were rolling by and lectures was going on, we learnt more about entrepreneurs, small and big businesses, globalisation, Porter's five forces, Pestle analysis and government regulations. I often wondered why emphasis were not laid on discussing our business plan and receiving lectures on it. This would be my negative evaluation regarding my journey. I would like to point out here that all our

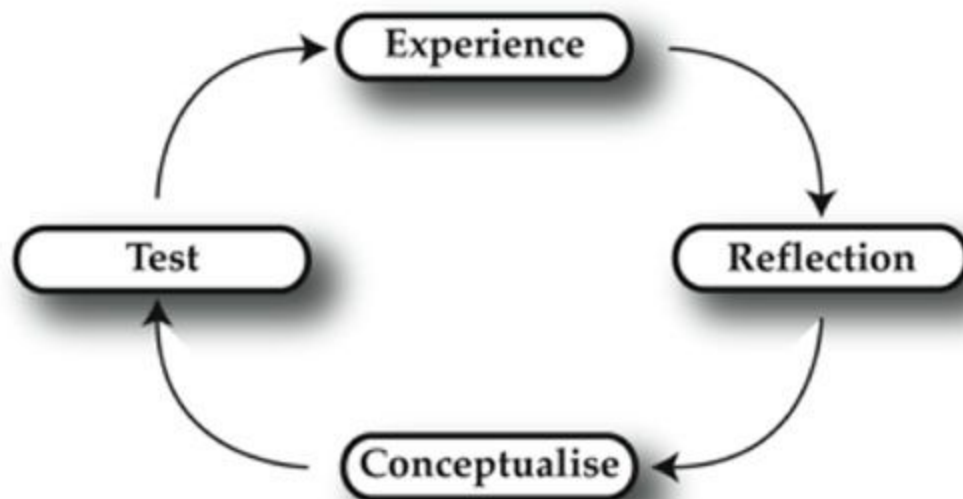
three team members worked really hard and no one lagged behind or hid behind others. We all played our capable parts in the preparations and encouraged ourselves especially when we practised our pitches before the final day of the presentation. We worked well together.

THE ANALYSIS

What sense did I make of the situation? (Gibbs 1988).

I realised that there was more to a business plan than I thought and even more to a powerpoint presentation than I knew. I had occupied the role of management in my various work experiences which meant that I have had to present and communicate with members of staff and colleagues, so I assumed management was leadership. I soon realised that both were different and there were new skill-set to learn.

Furthermore, though I have set out to report my experiences through Gibbs (1988) reflective cycle, I would also like to point out Kolb's learning styles.



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According to McLeod (2017), effective learning is evident when progress is seen through the cycle of four stages illustrated above. I had the experience during the 1st term of my studies, this report has allowed me some reflection over those experiences. The conceptualisation stage for me happened after the presentation and feedback, and the test which is also known as the active experimentation was carried out by having another presentation module this term which has happened already. On this note, giving all we learnt from mistakes made and improvements actioned, the feedback this time around was even better.

Therefore, effective learning has taken place in preparation for my goal to become self employed by the end of my course.

MY CONCLUSION

In conclusion and on hindsight, I could have suggested or challenged our lecturer to equip us better with guidance through the business plan preparations. Having said that because it was evident that a few other teams did not do well because of many reasons, my team feared better.

Furthermore, experience is a wonderful teacher and I believe no lesson learnt is lost so I have developed new skill set regarding writing a good business plan and giving a good presentation. Some of the key skills about presentation is to be able to capture my audience's attention within the first few seconds, making sure I have their interest and keep it and lastly, ensure that I understand their intention for listening and my intention for presenting.

ACTION PLAN

The action I have embark upon as a result of this module is researching my personal business and setting about writing a business plan. I have also gone further by taking a big step into starting a 'blog' on wordpress (www.crowncoverme.wordpress.com). This is the 1st step to my goal of becoming an entrepreneur.

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