

Professional Career Development (BMSW4012)

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Professional Career Development-Reflective Essay

Introduction

Professional career development is essential for personal growth, employability, and long-term career success. This reflective essay analyses my learning experiences from the Professional Career Development module using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988). Key models including the Johari Window, SMART goals, SWOT analysis, and career theories are examined, and how they have influenced on my employability abilities, job search tactics, and career planning is assessed. Cottrell (2021), Gallagher (2022), Robertson, Hooley, and McCash (2020), and others have provided insights that support the reflection.

Description

I participated in self-awareness exercises, career planning activities, and improvement of employability skills throughout the module. In order to assess my strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, I conducted a personal SWOT analysis, which was one of the most crucial assignments. Furthermore, I gained important insights into my personal characteristics and professional preferences through my participation in team-building exercises and leadership style assessments (by applying Holland's Career Theory and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)).

Another key experience in learning was developing a Personal Development Plan (PDP) utilising the SMART goal-setting methodology. I was able to break down my long-term professional objectives into achievable, realisable steps due to this technique. In addition, I took part in critical thinking exercises designed to improve my problem-solving skills and prepare me to evaluate various career options.

I used the S.T.A.R approach (Situation, Task, Action, Results) to create organised responses to competency-focused interview questions, which made the mock interview experience particularly beneficial. I found that practicing things like body language, tone, and non-verbal communication increased my confidence in work environments. Networking role-play was another helpful exercise that focused on the need of building strong professional ties by illustrating professional networking scenarios.

Feelings

Initially, I was overwhelmed by the self-assessment tasks because they required an extreme amount of reflection. Because it forced me to face my weaknesses and areas that needed improvement, the SWOT analysis proved to be very challenging. However, by using the Johari Window concept to facilitate conversations, I was able to identify hidden strengths and felt more confident.

I was anxious about my ability to answer structured questions in an appropriate manner during the mock interview. My ability to articulate my experiences clearly has improved, though, thanks to my preparation with the S.T.A.R method. It was eye-opening to learn that communication skills, active listening, and body language had a significant impact on interview success.

By the end of the module, I felt a significant sense of accomplishment, had a better understanding of my career path, employability capabilities, and professional strengths I was better prepared for real job applications, and the career planning process gratifying gave me clarity about my future career actions.

Evaluation

The module had several very beneficial aspects. For instance, my application approach was significantly improved when I discovered how to personalise my resume and cover letter to job positions. My resume used to be quite general and lacked potent accomplishment-focused claims. Using Gallagher's (2022) samples and incorporating criticism, I created a more compelling, skills-based resume.

Another crucial factor was the goal-setting exercises that used SMART criteria (Cottrell, 2021). My professional objectives were disorganised and unclear prior to this. But now that I've laid down specific objectives, my career path is clearer. Furthermore, setting both short-term and long-term goals has helped me create a well-organised strategy to gain the required expertise.

One challenge I faced was professional engagement and networking. The module emphasised the need of professional manners and LinkedIn networking, two things I had previously overlooked. I initially thought networking was intimidating, but I

eventually improved my skills to interact with professionals in the field and ask for career guidance.

However, I found it difficult to pay close attention to the details required by the recruitment and selection procedure. It was more difficult than expected to examine competency frameworks, person specifications, and job descriptions. This experience has made it clear that I need more practice analysing job criteria critically and matching my abilities to the right ones.

Analysis

My understanding of professional growth has been improved by the module's concepts, which align with a variety of career theories and models:

Personal Branding and Self-Awareness-I was able to determine my strengths and weaknesses by performing a SWOT analysis, which is consistent with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (Cottrell, 2019). In terms of personal branding, the Johari Window highlighted the value of feedback and how other people see me (Smale, 2015). Developing self-awareness has improved my capacity to promote myself to future employers.

Planning a Career and Establishing Objectives-Locke's Goal-Setting Theory is supported by the structured approach that was produced by using SMART goals (Gallagher, 2022). Holland's job Theory helped me understand how several job options fit with my personality (Robertson, Hooley, & McCash, 2020). I've found that participating in long-term career visioning exercises has helped me match my abilities with market demands.

Professional Development and Employability- In harmony with Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, the S.T.A.R. method improved my ability to answer interview questions (Dweck, 2017). My ability to communicate during interviews was enhanced by using the LISTEN framework (Look, Interpret, Stay Silent, Test understanding, Evaluate, Neutral answer) (Cottrell, 2021). My understanding of hiring practices has improved, which has helped me evaluate company expectations more accurately.

The process of selection and hiring-As I collaborated with peers to improve our application materials, I learnt how to customise resumes, job specifications, and interview techniques, which furthered concepts learnt from Tuckman's Group

Development Model (Cottrell, 2019). My ability to choose jobs that align with my professional goals has improved when I realised how important company culture and fit are.

To sum up, these models have drastically changed the way I approach career development, making the preparation process more methodical and successful.

Conclusion

My self-awareness, goal-setting skills, employability, and understanding of hiring practices have all significantly increased as a result of the Professional Career Development module. I have been able to critically examine my learning, challenges, and places for improvement by using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle.

The most significant thing I've learnt is that career development is a continuous process that necessitates adaptability, networking, skill enhancement, and self-evaluation. I've gained more confidence in presenting myself to future employers and in strategically organizing my career trajectory.

However, I recognise that I need to improve my networking abilities and my capacity to evaluate employment requirements. I plan to improve these areas through practicing in mock interviews, taking part in mentorship programs, and using LinkedIn.

Action Plan

I have developed a rigorous action plan that focusses on four crucial areas in order to encourage further professional development:

Enhancing Career Planning & Self-Reflection- Every six months, I update my Personal Development Plan (PDP) and SWOT analysis to track my progress and realign my career goals (Cottrell, 2021).

Set SMART professional objectives and review them every three months to make sure they remain relevant and aligned with market conditions (Gallagher, 2022).

To obtain specialised knowledge and direction from professionals in the field, take part in career coaching and mentorship programs (Robertson, Hooley, & McCash, 2020).

To identify areas that require improvement and make the required adjustments, consider the insights acquired from job applications and interviews (Smale, 2015).

Enhancing Professional Engagement & Networking -

To increase my exposure and reputation, I plan to expand my LinkedIn network, follow significant industry individuals, and take part in professional debates (Cottrell, 2021).

To develop beneficial relationships, go to at least three business conferences or professional networking events annually (Gallagher, 2022).

Join organisations and associations for professionals in my sector to learn about forthcoming opportunities and trends (Robertson, Hooley, & McCash, 2020).

Through virtual coffee gatherings, informational interviews, and mentorship programs, cultivate and maintain professional contacts (Dweck, 2017).

Enhancing Interview and Job Application Skills-

Make sure my resume and cover letter appropriately reflect the particular abilities and experiences needed for each job application by regularly updating and personalising them (Smale, 2015).

Implement competency-based interviewing techniques, structuring my answers using the STAR and SHEL frameworks (Cottrell, 2021).

Through simulated interviews, get feedback from coworkers, industry peers, and career counsellors (Robertson, Hooley, & McCash, 2020).

To give prospective employers concrete proof of my abilities and experiences, I should put together a portfolio that showcases my work, successes, and projects (Gallagher, 2022).

Dedication to Skill Development & Ongoing Learning-

Take online classes and obtain certificates in critical fields like data analysis, communication, leadership, and emerging technology (Gallagher, 2022).

To stay informed about the latest developments and trends, read papers, case studies, and reports specific to your industry (Robertson, Hooley, & McCash, 2020).

To apply theoretical knowledge in real-world situations, obtain hands-on experience through volunteer work, freelance projects, and internships (Cottrell, 2019).

By engaging in personal development activities like mindfulness and approaches to stress management, you can enhance your emotional intelligence and resilience (Dweck, 2017).

By regularly carrying out this action plan, I will increase my employability, industry knowledge, and career confidence, making sure I am ready for future job openings and professional achievements. My dedication to lifelong learning, networking, and flexibility will allow me to prosper in a changing labour market while consistently enhancing my knowledge and abilities.

References

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