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Introduction

In the present era of modernisation, education has become an essential aspect of human development. The higher the academic degree, the more is the chances for the candidate to acquire adequate job. However, the individual candidate must be aware of how to make use of the skills acquired through academia in order to increase the aspect of employability. In this study, I have evaluated my strengths and weakness, developed a plan for further development based on the opportunities at hand and the employability criteria specific to Health and Social Care.

Employability criteria: from recruitment agencies and job centres in HSC

The term employability is associated with the work of a candidate, and the skills that make the person capable of handling responsibilities related to the work. According to Sylva *et al.* (2019), there are various layers associated with employability, the most basic of which is to gain the initial employment criteria. This refers to the job matching criteria, where the critical competencies of the candidate match with the person specifications provided by the employer. The other aspect is the development of a candidate to be adept in higher job roles and better management of the current job role. This comes with experiences and owns learning, hence increasing the possibilities for further development. In Health and Social Care (HSC), the expectations associated with the employability of graduates is often based on the expectations of the patients, for which the professionals must themselves be fit (Miller *et al.*, 2019). The organisations are subjected to dealing with a severe time crunch, which effectively makes prompt actions and diligent practice as one of the most important criteria.

When it comes to HSC workers, it is essential to ensure that apart from their graduation and post-graduation specialising criteria, and they are accustomed to the diagnosis of mental, behavioural and emotional issues that the patients undergo. As pointed out by Williamson *et al.* (2020), *empathy* is one of the most essential qualities that must necessarily be possessed by every worker, also keeping in mind to set boundaries in this regard. *Active listening* is another essential quality of an HSC professional (Bollard, 2017). This is because, it is through interacting and listening to the patients that the employees would be able to truly identify the symptoms and causes of the diseases that the patients are subjected to. Every worker in the HSC is expected to be able to cooperate and coordinate with each other and every department for better outcomes (Yamada *et al.*, 2019). The responsibility of a health care or social care

professional is not restricted to the institution. However, it goes beyond and into the residences of the patients or the communities at large through various programmes, in order to ensure that the most vulnerable people are catered with their health needs, even if not asked for.

The entry criteria for qualification in the UK include an MBBS or equivalent qualification in education. The eligibility criteria concern the registration and licensing with the General Medical Council (Health Careers, 2020). It also requires two years of postgraduate medical experience. In this regard, it is essential to say that academic skills also play a significant role in the development of a candidate. Asking and responding to questions, fall under *communication skills* that are very crucial for academia (Siegel, 2018). Understanding the *inferred meaning in the texts* and researches and taking good notes are crucial determinants of a candidate's capability (Levesque *et al.*, 2019). *Developing arguments* and participating in debates, while having the patience and understanding to arrive at a point are important qualities that candidates could develop.

Academic and employability skills

When it comes to my academic and employability skills, I must say that my journey in academia and work has mostly been related to other fields. It not until very recently, looking at the current scenario of the exceeding need of healthcare in the world, I have decided to gain skills in the health and social care sector. I had always been more concerned about my practical career than academic career. I have been a part of the International Baccalaureate (IB), Romania. The programme that I was under concerned teacher training. I could master the skills of questioning and delivering speeches, making short announcements, and other aspects of oral communication while taking my training. I was also able to develop research skills where I can easily comprehend the meaning of the inferred texts. I had mastered the skills of participating in debates and asserting my perspectives. I did get much chance to work in teams, which also helped me to understanding how to coordinate. In my final year which was 2003, I got to cooperate and coordinate with team mates of international backgrounds, which assisted me to understand their culture.

I had started working as a call center in Italy in the year 2009, where I was responsible of managing the accounts, followed by working as a retail sales assistant in Greens International Food Centre, Edgware in the year 2016, where my work was to cater to the needs of the

customers. These two jobs have helped me in building expertise on digital and technological skills. I have been currently working as a certified nail technician for Borehamwood Nails, Borehamwood, where I have learned about sanitisation and hygiene and catering to the needs of the customers. All throughout my life, I had been living in different places which had given me the opportunity to be skilled over four languages, English, Romanian, Spanish and Italian. However, given the current situation with COVID 19, I am being extremely worried about how I can be the most use to the society, as catering to the health and social needs is much more in need than what I am currently pursuing. This concern had led me to take up Health and Social Care as part of my higher studies.

SWOT

Strengths	Communication: I am good at listening, and negotiation and coordination. I have been much used to asking or answering questions along with participating in debates, making quick announcements and so on. Teamwork: I have learnt how to manage my own and team performance with empathy while working in groups having cross cultural element and delivering tasks within time. Digital and technological skills: I have been able to develop the digital skills that would be required in analysing health data. Taking notes and inferring researches: I have a good idea about the concepts of health and diseases and the very understanding of public health.
Weaknesses	Academic knowledge and degree: Being just a beginner in the field of health and social care, I have no experience or academic knowledge about the subject. My degrees so far are not related. Stress management: I am not good at handling stress. Political awareness: Knowledge about the politics of health, referring to the social determinants and various stakeholders are not something that I am clearly aware of.
Opportunities	Training programmes: There are online and offline training programmes available. Off-campus training can also be availed through distance learning courses for higher studies. Internships: Through enrolling in internship programmes in big institutions, greater knowledge and teambuilding skills can be achieved. Increasing need for healthcare: There is a growing need for healthcare services

	in the UK, which increases the need for health care professionals.
Threats	Fitness and safety: The emergence of the deadly diseases has increased the risks amongst the health and social care professionals. It has also caused a lot of problem in smooth educational courses. Immigration: The number of health professional immigrants has been on the rise, which has reduced the chances of being employed License to practice: Since I need and MBBS or equivalent qualification to be registered with the GMC, it would take a lot of time which rises the uncertainty.

PDP

Skills	Areas of improvement	Actions to be taken	Period of time	Outcome
Academic knowledge	Academic career and academic degree	Score well in the upcoming examination that will help me to complete graduation and post-graduation courses to get the license to practise	8 months	A student with better idea about HSC
Stress management	Nutrition and mental rest, especially at crucial moments	Eating and living healthy through well balanced meals and opting for yoga and work out	9 months	Positive attitude and complete control over mental state
Political awareness	Have better knowledge about the types of suppliers and quality commissioners in HSC of the UK.	Learn about specific stakeholders associated with health and social care, along with their specific perspectives	4 months	Complete knowledge of the existing stakeholders and the guidelines and regulations that bind the institutions of HSC
Digital skills	Several	Learn to use statistical	9 months	Must be able to

specific to health care	administrative sources under the NHS working across UK	tools and the electronic health record (EHR) system as part of academia		deal with the health and social care patients data record and analyse them
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Action plan

Actions	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	Month 6	Month 7	Month 8	Month 9	Month 10	Month 11	Month 12
Score well in the upcoming examination that will help me to complete graduation and post-graduation courses to get the license to practise	Go through the academic books and material provided by the tutors and uses the research skills to gain better knowledge.				Communicate with the peers and prepare for the exam to be held by the institution. Communicating with the teachers or professors at this stage would also be important							
Eating and living healthy through well balanced meals and opting for meditation, yoga and work out	Improve my diet plan by implementing small changes Start accepting events that are out of control meditate		Start making yoga and workout part of the daily routine and learn through free tutorials available over the internet									
Learn about specific stakeholders			Learn about the nature of patients, whether they are • Dependent • Intellectual • Sceptical How to deal with them		Learn about organisations and their suppliers in the UK. Role of organisations like NHS, CQC, NICE in setting standards							
Learn to use statistical tools and the electronic health record (EHR) system					Learn about the different types of data that administrative sources of NHS deliver.				Be accustomed to the registration, admissions, discharge, and transfer (RADT) data associated with the EHR system, which would be helpful in the work environment for handling situations like COVID 19 pandemic (Baek et al., 2018)			

Reflection on academic progress- Gibbs

On reflecting on the journey that had been on with this module, I feel that the Gibbs reflective cycle would be the best way of expressing. The cycle has been shown in the figure below:

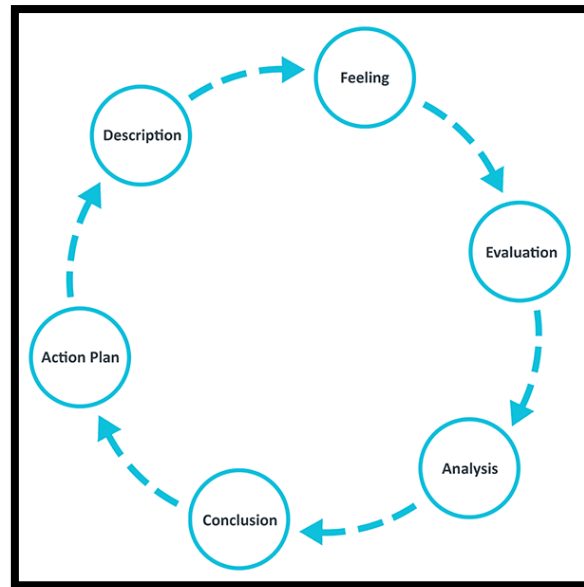


Figure 1: Gibbs reflective cycle

(Source: Li *et al.*, 2020)

This study was based on the consideration of what skills are expected from a higher education student of the HSC sector, compared to the skills I possessed or lacked. These involved both academic and employability skills. While conducting the study, I felt that there were several areas of strengths and weakness that I needed to look into for my personal and professional development. My strengths were communication, technological and digital skills, teamwork and research skills, while the weaknesses included lack of academic knowledge and understanding regarding the subject matter of health care and the practical and political knowledge specific to health care. I had evaluated and analysed my skills using SWOT analysis and decided on making the action plan, which was based on my concluded targets in the personal development plan. The module has made me feel that although I am extremely new to the field, it is possible for me to overcome my shortcomings when I take concrete steps towards the future.

Conclusion

The knowledge and application of academic skills are important aspects determining the productivity of an employee in the workplace. This study is a personal evaluation and reflection of my own learning and achievement of skills in line with Health and Social Care, and the areas where I need to focus on for further improvement through a proper development plan, followed by an action plan for time management. All of this has been based on what the employers in this particular sector are looking for. I have had almost no experience in health and social care so far but the urge to be more of use for the society and made me want to take up the course. This study has shown me the direction and areas of change, which would help me achieve expertise, even at the face of odds.

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