

Academic and Employability Skills

BMSW4001

REFLECTIVE WRITING

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is a reflection on some of the themes that I learned about in the academic and employability skills module of the programme I am now registered. I selected each topic considering the level of my understanding about them. The discussion is with reference at the experiences I had in class activities and a model of reflection to analyse the experiences.

The goal of this reflection is to improve one's personal understanding and practice of reflective writing in educational work and life situations as well as being able to reflect on my own learning as a student.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Oxford Dictionary (2012) defines reflective writing as being the act or process of thinking thoroughly or extensively about a specific subject, usually influenced by someone's previous life and experiences. While Yocco (2018) argues that personal reflection allows us to understand and make sense of all of our wonderful (and not-so-wonderful) learning and job experiences. And that this can be done academically and non-academically.

Reflections from personal experience on themes covered in class, as well as published theory utilised to explain and evaluate my experience, will be included as evidence in this reflective report.

The goal of this study is to examine and explain my personal reflective experiences on the topics of time management, CV writing, paraphrasing, and public speaking analysing my experience using the reflective learning cycle. This is Kolb's learning cycle or experiential learning, his aim is for the learner to gain ideas from own experiences, *reflect* on them, *learn from the experiences*, and then *test* the new ideas in the future (Fallin, 2017).

2. TOPICS OF REFLECTION

2.1 Time management

I knew about the term time management before learning more about it in the module, but I have never sat down and plan my time. I normally go along with my activities in the day.

The class when I learned about how to manage time was very interesting because it made me understand more how useful "time" is and that sometimes I waste most of my time instead of organising myself and doing something important like spending more time with family or do something I enjoy.

During one of the activities in class I had to look back at one day in my life and put down the time I spend on things I do. I realised I feel I am stuck in a routine: waking up, go to work, spend time on train journey come back home, eat, take a shower, stay on the phone a lot, go to sleep then start again. Now I do not even watch TV anymore, is like the phone took over my life. I was shocked. I knew I waste a lot of time on my phone but never actually stopped and analysed this.

Now I realised that I need to make a change on how I spend time on some things and do more with my life, and waste less time, because time in this life is very short anyway. I knew this would be a difficult task for me. Moreover, Kolb's (1984) approach emphasises individual learning through experience. He mentions that "Learning is the process through which knowledge is formed via the transformation of experience". I can identify myself through this, and I can conclude that this was a fresh experience for me, one that taught me to think clearly about the way I use my time.

Reflecting on this experience has opened my eyes and made me appreciate my time more and I planned to change it starting with cutting the time on the phone and instead with the weather being nice I go in the park with my daughter every evening to practice her kickboxing.

2.2 CV writing

Reflecting on my past experience from one of the lessons, I can remember the topic lesson was about the CV. Which I did not seem very interested in at the start as I said to myself "I know what a CV is". I knew that you need to write one when you apply for a job but never needed one for myself. But what seemed very interesting was to learn that writing a CV is much more complicated at least parts of it are as they involve a person's skills. This attracted my attention as I am in the process of discovering and describing my own skills and I was curious to find out more about what type of skills a person needs to write in the CV.

A CV or "Curriculum Vitae" which means "course of life in Latin", is a complete document that lists all of your life's accomplishments, qualifications, connections, awards, and skills (SkillsYouNeed, 2021). Besides the personal details and education, I found that is really important to add sections on Key Skills, Knowledge and Achievements and Work Experience that are relevant to the job you are applying for and also a personal statement which is optional.

I thought that the purpose of a CV is to help you get a job, but I was wrong. Gutmann (2002) explains that actually a CV's purpose is "to get you the interview" which makes more sense now that I know what each section should contain and that is relevant to a specific job. Gutmann (2002) also adds that first I would need to pass the reader's attention and that every little mistake like the quality of paper or structure can make the reader not to read the CV. Furthermore the next step is passing the "Skim" or the important information that interests the reader like relevant skills or if each section has up-to date information. If I got the reader's attention and passed the steps above the last thing is to sell myself and describe the skills and knowledge relevant to the job.

Learning more about how and what to write in the CV was a little less complicated by the end of lesson as I understood that is useful to have a CV for my future employment applications. But in order for me to be ready I already started to apply the knowledge learnt in class and started writing my CV.

Having read some research on the internet and a few examples of CVs, simple or job related, I took some notes and finished writing my personal details and education as to have an easy start. I am not yet confident that it will be good, but I plan to take the advice from the lecturer and give someone to check my finished CV before using it to apply for jobs and then I would be able to correct the mistakes.

This experience of starting to write my own CV has given me a sense of accomplishment and a reminder of the things I have done so far. So I will make use of it in the future and is ready and will just have to update it when needed.

2.3 Paraphrasing

Proper paraphrasing is an essential academic skill for avoiding plagiarism and demonstrating knowledge of a source (Bailey, 2011).

In my opinion, paraphrasing is a topic usually used by people when writing an academic work. I had never used paraphrasing before, until the lecturer introduced it to me with theory and practise in the first few themes of the module. There I have done some practicing which was very hard at the beginning. Bailey (2011) presents a clear definition, stating that paraphrasing is modifying the wording of a text so that it differs greatly from the actual source without changing the meaning.

Since learning about the concept of paraphrasing in class, I was able to practise applying it in class activities and then use it to complete the end-of-term assignments. I think I did good with my practicing, just finding synonyms to change the meaning of some words and then rephrase them I need to work on. This was the correct experience for me, and I agree with Kolb's (1984) idea that we learn with experience. As a result of my experiences and reflections on what was new in class, I was able to apply what I had learned in class to help writing the assignments.

The knowledge I got improved my understanding of the text I was reading, and most importantly, when I paraphrase, I now try to ensure that I follow the meaning of the original text when changing the structure and words, and that I remember to reference the source at the end.

However, as I am already doing in the research and writing of the work for the assignments this term, I will surely continue to use and apply these new skills as they are important in my future work in the next terms.

2.4 Public speaking

Usually, in my group of friends I am very active when I speak in front of them, actually at times I forget to let others speak. But when I am in different situations with different people is as if I am changed, the nerves get to me, and I start babbling and get red faced. And I never stopped to think why this is happening until I had to present my three biggest achievements in class or have my exam presentation. Luckily for me it was online, and I did not see everyone looking at me. I was nervous as I knew people are looking at me and listening and making their opinions in their heads. My speech was not very clear, and I was so nervous, but I got to talk about what I have achieved in my life, and I think because it was a comfortable subject, I knew what to say and felt more relaxed.

Public speaking is the skill of successful oral communication with an audience; the act or practise of giving public speeches (SkillsYouNeed, 2021). Public speaking can also refer to any situation in which someone speaks in front of two or more people (MindTools, 2021). I associate more with the second description as I only need to focus on talking in front of small groups, like around 10, not a big audience.

I need to overcome my public speaking skills to be able to speak in front of staff, in teams' meetings and direct them correctly as I am planning to become a supervisor at my workplace. As a supervisor I will need to speak daily with people and tell them what to do and because is a different environment and the language is a barrier, I am afraid sometimes that I do not make myself understood. This is why I need to improve my communication skills too so I can speak clear and correct in front of other people.

The practice in class helped me a lot especially my power point presentation. I cannot get rid of the nerves, but I noticed that if I practice a lot before it is helping a lot, I learn by experiencing it.

What I need to do is try and slow down not to make mistakes when speaking and because I will have meetings very often, to plan and practice what to say to the men in the meeting, before getting to work. After practicing in class I know I am able to further develop and improve my public speaking. I just need time to focus and practice and hopefully I will be better at speaking in public.

3. CONCLUSION

Looking at some of my experiences it helped me to write this report and I was able to analyse and understand the concept of reflection. Applying the model of reflection to my own experiences was a great opportunity to know myself but also learn that it is very useful to reflect as I learnt from it.

Having followed the theory was a good starting point to start my own reflection as it presented easy steps to analyse an experience that can be applied to any situation in life. I was capable of thinking about the topics experienced, show the way I felt about the circumstances and evaluate them. All four topics are of great importance for my learning and development as a student but also for my work and personal life too. In the end I understood what influence will have on me, and how helpful reflective on them will be for me in the future.

In conclusion, because many people learn best through experience, I learned that reflecting on past experiences can help me deal with new ones more effectively in the future, allowing me to use skills that I have not used before to become a better learner.

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