Employability Skills Module: Professional Career Development

Module code: BMSW4012

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Part 1: Individual Reflection

Certificate of Higher Education

Preparing for future employment requires more than just ambition, it demands a conscious effort to grow, adapt, and refine my abilities over time. My current focus lies in using education as a tool to build the foundational skills needed in the modern workplace, such as effective communication, technological confidence, and the ability to think critically in unfamiliar situations. Through structured learning and reflection, I have begun to recognise how my academic journey and personal developmental background is directly shaping my employability. This reflection explores how I have used several analytical methods to gain deeper insight into my personal development and future goals. Tools such as SWOT analysis, the RIASEC model, SMART target setting, the Johari Window, and Honey and Mumford's learning styles have enabled me to better understand my capabilities, preferences, and areas for growth (Holland, 1997; Honey and Mumford, 1986; Luft and Ingham, 1955; Locke and Latham, 2002; Panagiotou, 2003). Each framework has helped me make sense of my experiences and identify clear actions I can take to strengthen my career readiness. This essay will evaluate my progress so far and demonstrate how these tools have and will continue to guide my personal and professional development through education and reflection.

SWOT analysis is a reflective planning tool used to identify an individual's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, which offers a structured way to assess my current position and plan for future growth (Panagiotou, 2003; MindTools, 2023). Applying this model to my own development has helped me evaluate the skills and behaviours I have acquired through both work and education. For instance, my background in nursing has strengthened my interpersonal communication, emotional resilience, and ability to remain composed in high-pressure environments which are key strengths that translate well into a range of careers. Working directly with patients required empathy, accuracy, and time management, which now support my ability to stay focused and organised in academic settings. However, one notable weakness I identified is my limited confidence in using digital tools and platforms, especially for formal communication and data management. In both nursing and education, I often relied on verbal interaction, which means I now need to invest in developing skills such as written communication, using software for presentations, and managing information effectively through technology. Learning and applying SWOT through this course has allowed me to effectively identify my strengths and weaknesses, enabling me to formulate a clear picture of how my past experiences can shape my future career.

Reflecting further through SWOT, I've recognised how returning to education has opened new opportunities to develop these essential employability skills. Through structured learning and access to digital resources, I've begun strengthening areas like report writing, online collaboration, and professional use of technology — all crucial in modern workplaces. The university environment also provides the chance to receive feedback from tutors and peers, which helps me gradually build confidence in areas where I feel less competent.

The course has also introduced me to the RIASEC model, developed by John Holland, categorises individuals into six personality types being Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional which can help guide career choices by matching personality traits with suitable work environments (Holland, 1997). Reflecting on my own profile, I identify most strongly with the Social and Realistic types. My nursing experience exemplifies these traits well: the Social aspect is reflected in my desire to work closely with and support others, showing empathy and communication skills, while the Realistic side appears in the practical, hands-on nature of patient care and problem-solving in clinical settings. Understanding these traits has given me insight into why I felt fulfilled in nursing and has encouraged me to pursue further education that enhances my ability to work effectively with people while developing essential technical and communication skills. This awareness helps me focus on career paths that combine interpersonal interaction with practical application, ensuring that my future job roles align with both my interests and strengths.

A comprehensive understanding of my weaknesses through reflection using the prior methods have allowed me to take next steps in how to overcome these barriers. Setting SMART objectives which are goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound are essential for turning broad ambitions into clear, manageable steps (Locke and Latham, 2002; University of Leicester, 2022). For my personal development, I have created SMART targets centred around improving key skills such as technological proficiency and communication, which are vital for today's job market. For example, one specific goal is to complete an online course in advanced Microsoft Office tools within the next three months, measurable by passing all assessments with at least 80%. This target is achievable given my current access to resources and time management plans, and highly relevant as many professional roles require these digital skills. Additionally, I aim to enhance my written and verbal communication by attending university workshops and actively participating in class discussions, with the goal of noticeably improving my confidence and clarity by the end of this academic year. These targeted objectives help maintain my focus, monitor my progress, and ensure that my educational efforts translate into tangible employability skills. SMART targets do not only set out a clear path to improve my professional skills overall, but also remind me of my purpose and ensure that I am committed to achieving my goals.

The Johari Window is a valuable model for increasing self-awareness and improving communication by exploring how much of ourselves is known or unknown to us and others. It consists of four quadrants: the Open Area (known to self and others), Blind Area (unknown to self but known to others), Hidden Area (known to self but hidden from others), and Unknown Area (unknown to both) (Luft and Ingham, 1955; SkillsYouNeed, 2023). Applying this to my personal development, I have found that

actively seeking feedback from peers and tutors has helped reduce my Blind Area, revealing traits or habits I was previously unaware of, particularly in teamwork and presentation skills. For example, previous constructive criticism about my public speaking and grammar helped me identify areas to improve, leading me to engage more confidently in class discussions. By deeper and more thorough reflection, I was able to also develop my Hidden area by overcoming insecurities about weaknesses and striving to improve weaker skills rather than suppressing them. This process of reciprocal feedback and self-disclosure is essential in education and future workplaces, fostering better collaboration and personal growth.

Furthermore, the Honey and Mumford's learning styles identify four distinct approaches to learning: Activist, Reflector, Theorist, and Pragmatist. Understanding my preferred learning style has been instrumental in shaping how I engage with my education and develop employability skills (Honey and Mumford, 1986; Education Corner, 2024). I have discovered that I am primarily a Pragmatist, meaning I learn best by applying ideas practically and testing concepts in real-world situations. This aligns well with my background as a nurse, where hands-on experience and problem-solving were crucial, and now influences how I approach academic tasks. For instance, I find it most effective to immediately practice new technological skills or communication techniques in assignments or group projects, rather than focusing solely on theory. Recognising this helps me select learning opportunities that match my style, such as workshops and simulations, ensuring that my development is both meaningful and effective. This self-awareness ultimately supports my goal of acquiring skills that are directly applicable to the workplace.

To turn these insights into tangible progress, I have developed a detailed action plan focused on continuous improvement through education and skill-building. This plan includes specific steps such as enrolling in technology courses to enhance my digital literacy, regularly seeking feedback from tutors and peers to expand my self-awareness, and setting monthly SMART goals to track my communication and teamwork skills development. I also plan to apply my learning style by prioritising practical, hands-on activities, such as volunteering or internships, to reinforce theoretical knowledge. The continuous and further use of the self reflection methods learnt in the course will also allow me to identify new areas of development within myself and gain an even deeper understanding of my professional standing. By consistently reviewing and adapting this plan based on my reflections and new challenges, I am ensuring that my personal development remains focused, dynamic, and aligned with both my immediate academic requirements and long-term career ambitions.

In conclusion, using reflective tools such as SWOT analysis, RIASEC profiling, SMART objectives, the Johari Window, and Honey and Mumford's learning styles has been fundamental to my personal and professional growth. These methods have helped me better understand my strengths and areas for improvement, align my

career goals with my interests, and develop a structured approach to acquiring essential skills through education. My nursing experience combined with my ongoing studies has deepened my communication, practical, and technological abilities, equipping me to adapt to a changing job market. By continuously applying these strategies, I am confident I will build a strong foundation for a successful career, remaining flexible and proactive in my lifelong learning journey.

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