

In this essay I will reflect on my journey throughout the Inclusive Education foundation degree, focusing on my own personal development and skill development to date. I will be using Gibb's Reflective Model to analyse and critically reflect on some key experiences throughout the duration of this course so far. Main (2023) notes that Gibbs Reflective Model is a popular model of reflection as it encourages consideration of own experiences in more in-depth, analytical ways helping identify how to improve in the future.

The Inclusive Education degree first came to my attention after I received an email from my work promoting and detailing how to apply to the course. Initially I did not consider applying due to self-doubts and the realisation that I had not been an academic student for over five years. However, after careful consideration and more research of the course, I decided to apply as being able to continue full time work and study was ideal, as well as the course having subject matter relevant to my employment.

In September 2022 I officially started the degree and for the first time since college had lectures to attend and assignments due that included different academic pieces such as Essays, Presentations and E-portfolios. After four weeks of lectures during which I learned how to write academically and reference, our first essay was a 500-word count essay. I immediately felt confidence as in previous studies my Language and Literature skills were always a strength, however I had anxieties of what style and requirements of writing university level would expect and if I would be good enough.

Once we had our marks back, I had received a merit which shocked me as I had been doubting my abilities and if I was ready to be an academic student again. This high grade helped push self-doubts away and become more confident in the pieces of work I produced, throughout the first year every assignment I submitted was marked merit or higher, I felt this motivated me to keep achieving this grade and also more pressure to not let my marks slip.

The reason that I continued to achieve high marks was due to the positive feelings and relief of seeing hard work pay off and receiving positive and constructive feedback from my lecturers. However, If I had received a mark lower than expected, the new motivation would be to ensure that the next result I received to be back to my set out standard. This leans into Skinner's Theory of Operant Conditioning, the positive feedback from lectures being the desirable stimuli whilst the effort and hard work put into assignments being the reinforced behaviour. (Nickerson, 2024). This

explains why seeing successful grades and encouraging feedback helped keep me motivated as the purpose of Skinner's positive reinforcement "is to increase frequency of desired behaviours by helping to identify and validate them" (Sigler and Aamidor, 2005, P.250).

From the experience of submitting and passing assignments throughout the first year of this degree made me realise that I am capable of providing a high standard of work and that I have the inner motivation to keep me striving to succeed. Although it is important to remember that assignment intensity will heighten as I continue my studies and to stay humble and not let high grades from year one effect my attitude and approach to assignments in future. My action plan in order to continue to receive high grades throughout year two included not to underestimate assignments and to keep motivated to put the effort in for each module. In order to do this, I would need to keep attending lectures and develop better time management skills.

In the second year of this degree, the assignment level had risen, and task specifications included higher word counts and the use of video evidence to support some modules. This change in intensity showed weaknesses in my time management skills and due to unpreventable health issues led to failure to turn up to some lectures, leaving me to fall behind and have to catch up. As part of my student service support and ongoing health condition I have access to extra time on assignments if requested in time, I ended up using this time on assignments during year two.

Before lectures finished, I would feel quite confident in the subject matter and begin planning what I would do for the assignments, however after realising that I had tendencies to procrastinate and due to symptoms of my mental health sometimes couldn't work even if I wanted too, I began to doubt my abilities again. I became anxious after having lectures to catch up on and daunted by the extra workload, Initially I did not want to contact student services for extra support as I believe in my ability to produce and submit course work on time. Even so after being awarded an extra week I felt relief and that I now had adequate time to support work that is of my high standard.

What worked well is the support I received from student services, as my condition is ongoing and symptoms are unforeseen having time to ensure I still achieve is essential. My own time management and communication skills were what let me down throughout the duration of year two, although illness is unforeseeable if I had adequately managed time, I would have produced more work before symptoms had arisen.

Things ended up going well as I managed to overcome my anxieties and reach out for student support for extra time to submit, although with better time management skills the need to include student services could have been avoided. I also didn't contact student services until one day before the assignment was due as my stubbornness didn't want to admit I needed it, contacting then sooner could have avoided extra stress and anxieties. One of Covey's habits of highly effective people is to Be Pro-active, and defines it as being more than taking initiative, it means "we are responsible for our own lives. Our behaviour is a function of our decisions, not our conditions. We can subordinate feelings to values. We have the initiative and the responsibility to make things happen." (Covey and Collins, 2020, P.81). For example, had I been more pro-active in starting assignment work immediately after lectures had been delivered then I would have had less anxieties and worry allowing me to focus more on providing a high standard of work.

I have learned from year two that time management is essential for success in this degree, as we are working and studying it is even more important that we set allocated time to research and complete assignments. Nasrullah and Khan (2015) note that every student should have the ability to manage time by setting goals and priorities, using time management mechanisms and organisation in using time, though this is only possible through self-motivation, performance ability and motivation. I also could have effectively communicated to lectures about my anxieties as I seem to forget that they are also there to support us as students.

In future I plan to effectively manage my time by setting deadlines to complete well before the submission due date to effectively reduce my stress of assignments. I also plan to be open with communication with my lecturers and send coursework through as drafts to ease worries that I haven't understood the assignment. I will also communicate with student services within plenty of time of the submission date if I feel that my health has affected my productivity to again take extra pressure of assignment submissions.

For my third year of the degree prior to starting I had remembered my action plan of better time management and communication, however due to poor health and scheduling issues I had missed all in person lectures of our first module, Skills for employability in the 21st century. I had to catch up on lectures and missed the chance for an appointment with Mel Hall from career services, which was recommended to help with component one of the assignments. The module aimed to build the skills and competencies necessary for career resilience and development.

Prior to catching up with lectures I felt somewhat disappointed as personally I prefer modules that focus on professional practices rather than personally development. Once I had caught up with lectures, I realised how helpful the module content is for future career development and began to feel more positive about the module content. I failed to be able to arrange an appointment with career services due to a mix-up with emails which left me feeling at a disadvantage for the C.V component of the assignment.

The module content was delivered well, and it was made clear what support and assistance were available to us, however missing the opportunity to meet with the careers advisor may have hindered some elements of component one. I also would have benefited from better time management skills to have better attendance during lectures.

I think what worked well is the relevance to our future careers during lectures, as most student on this inclusive education course have a career focus, having a module delivered helping us discover what the future can hold is very beneficial. To get the most out of lectures things could have worked better if I had prioritized time management and attended live rather than watching recordings. Linking to Pierre Bourdieu's theory of society, having a degree is seen as institutionalized cultural capital which leads to greater social status and success (Power, 1999). This means that after completion of the degree I should have an advantage for future careers. Power (1999) also notes the habitual theory is a set of internal dispositions that reflects external social structures and shapes how a person perceives and acts in the world. Relating to my own background, no member of my family has attended university, which meant it was less likely for me to attend however I have broken that stereotype.

I have learnt a lot from this module content, I have learned what options are out there for me post-graduation, how to produce and write a professional C.V and continued to develop my lacking time management skills. Continuing into the year I would like to ensure that I attend every lecture live to avoid having to catch up on lectures and as a result wasting time. In order to do this, I will communicate with my lectures for any conflicting schedules and ensure that my workplace will honour my lecture dates. I have also learnt and will continue to develop my growth mindset which believes "Abilities can be developed and are more likely to see effort as something that propels learning and to see setbacks as opportunities to build new skills" (Armstrong, 2019).

To conclude over the course of the first two years of this degree I have developed a multitude of transferable skills that will benefit me in my future employments. Although it is important to acknowledge my time

management weaknesses and to be proactive and develop them whilst continuing year three. After graduating this year, I will follow my professional development plan from component one to continue my university journey and graduate with a full degree, this is another example of Covey (2017) habits of successful people as beginning with the end in mind is beneficial to success. I will continue to motivate myself to continue my education and achieve my goal of studying my PGC, with a growth mindset this will become possible.

References

Armstrong, K. (2019), Carol Dweck on how Growth Mindsets can bear fruit in the classroom, Available at:

<https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/dweck-growth-mindsets> (Accessed: 30th October 2024).

Covey, S.R. (2017), *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, New York City: Simon & Shuster

Covey, R.S. and Collins, J.C. (2020), *The 7 habits of highly effective people powerful lessons in personal change*, New York: Simon & Schuster.

Main, P. (2023), *Gibbs Reflective Cycle*, Available at: <https://www.structural-learning.com/post/gibbs-reflective-cycle> (Accessed: 28th October 2024).

Nasrullah, S. and Khan, S.M. (2015), 'The impact of time management on the students' academic achievements', *Journal of Literature, Language and Linguistics*, (11), PP.66-71, Available at: https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/61974506/TheImpactofTimeManagementontheStudents1-PB_220200203-103607-5m0fsb.pdf?1580726185=&response-content-disposition=inline%3B+filename%3DThe_Impact_of_Time_Management_on_the_Stu.pdf&Expires=1730390265&Signature=fQxPKqjzTOL4pn1ZSst5kTp3USm8xMRe8AWHyN8NN~9NIqMsidlnTa4uVOP62YsCiGWJjVzFIGdSkZIDyDr7nSQVqE6Cp~3LQfqaHygUlWpXhkjt7kPwO9mA3aKy3BpPDVBH5bEWZKWYljk6orinXxbnnW2qeeyZWntldP3gDNn04pD5HBL-pud9agAqK25fBFJI4OhzGr0ltGYjrws5u7N2mkuymm4IstX66G6oZMua6fnqzIj~3iJZGtcmXF~VdmkXRoy-xHPdyGRYKuEFUx3-WyDfHbyWIKlvdbki~0A4ATm4MerednmpTM1k2V4~V2WRahcoO6X9JvL7W6zvkw__&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA (Accessed: 29th October 2024).

Nickerson, C. (2024), *Positive Reinforcement: What is it and how does it work?* Available at: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/positive-reinforcement.html> (Accessed: 28th October 2024).

Power, M.E. (1999), 'An introduction to Pierre Bourdieu's Key theoretical concepts', *Journal for the study of food and society*, 3(1), PP.48-52, DOI: [10.2752/152897999786690753](https://doi.org/10.2752/152897999786690753).

Sigler, E.A. and Aamidor, S. (2005), 'From Positive Reinforcement to Positive Behaviours: An everyday guide for the Practitioner', *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 32(4), PP.249-253, DOI:10.1007/s10643-004-0753-9.