

BMSW4005

PROFESSIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT

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INTRODUCTION

The reflexive Cycle developed by Graham Gibbs in 1998 gives us an effective framework in order to analyse in depth experiences and feelings. According to Gibbs is important to reflect on our experiences to give a sense of different situations that can help us in the future to improve our behaviour and skills. This useful framework will help to critically connect theories and feelings and experiences that will allow me to think and act different in the future (Gibbs, 2013).



The Reflective Cycle (Gibbs, 1988)
Reference Gibbs, G (1988) Learning by doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods.
Further Education Unit. Oxford Polytechnic: Oxford

1. Episode 1: Description, Feelings, Evaluation, Analysis, conclusion and Action Plan.

During the last few years, I was working as a self-employed accountant in Italy. After my graduation I liked to work by myself as no one could have told me what to do and I would definitely have the power to be the only decision-maker for my company.

After many years, I started to feel bored about my job as everything appears the same every day, and I felt a victim of my comfort zone that made me feel frustrated and unmotivated. After having lost my enthusiasm for my job as I realised that I didn't develop my career for many years, I decided to change my life in order to feel better and positive again. From this experience I realised that working as a self-employed it has pro and cons because if you work in a company, you can grow faster as they offer courses and trainings. Even if I like my job, I strongly wanted to improve my skills and for this reason, I moved to London to improve my English and compete on the international working environment. I decide to start a course Certificate of Higher Education Skills for the workplace that could help me to improve my competencies and understand the fundamental skills for the workplace.

I always wanted to work as an Accountant Manager in a British company because after many years working as a self-employed I started to feel unsatisfied as I would like to interact with team member, to integrate in a multicultural environment, receive trainings in order to develop my career. I decided to take action of my life and analyse, through a lifeline, my high and low points in order to understand how different choices can affect my future career. The lifeline framework helps me to look back on what went well in my life and learn from what went wrong. Analysing the key events in my life, made possible for me to comprehend what I didn't like so far about my career and how to react in order to get out from my comfort zone (Ibarra, 2007). During my university course I had the opportunity to read an interesting article about the Labour market overview in the UK updated at January 2021. The data from Labour Force Survey (LFS) show that the unemployment rate is increasing but less than the falls were seen during the first stage of the (COVID-19) pandemic.

Unemployment (all aged 16+)

Quarterly change: 0.6pps ▲

Annual change: 1.2pps ▲



Analysing these data, I felt nervous and frustrated as the Covid-19 pandemic negatively reduced the opportunities and possibilities to find a job as an Accountant Manager. I realised that many people were redundant and the competition is currently very high as many people apply for the same Job.

During the years, I could have changed my life earlier as now I'm 52 years old and start again a new job experience, in a foreign country, it's frustrating but at the same time exiting. I could have taken an English course before arriving in the UK but I didn't and now sometimes I feel lost when I interact with people. Furthermore, another limit that makes me feel unmotivated are my digital skills. When I moved to England, I noticed how important is to have advances digital skills in order to find a Job as the technologies are changing and developing fast every day. For most of the company in the UK, digital skills are no longer optional anymore and many employers affirm that often they find difficult to fill job vacancies.

Recent studies developed by Burning Glass Technologies highlighted how employer Demand for digital Skills increased in the last few years.

"Specific digital skills are key to unlocking opportunities for job seekers and addressing the shortage of digitally skilled workers in the UK. Digital skills are essential entry requirements

*for two-thirds of UK SOC occupations²
and carry with them a wage differential over non-digital roles. These occupations account for
82%³ of online job vacancies”*

The same research shows how different UK qualifications give students different level of digital skills. I decided to study a Certificate of higher Education as it gives a Middle- skill of digital knowledge that I can improve with additional courses.

Table 2: Skill Levels

Skill Level	RQF Levels included	Example qualifications
Low-Skill	Entry level, Level 1, Level 2	Entry level certificate, GCSE, Level 1/2 certificate, intermediate apprenticeship, Functional Skills ²⁸
Middle-Skill	Level 3, Level 4, Level 5	A level, Advanced Apprenticeship, Higher National Certificate (HNC), Higher National Diploma (HND)
High-Skill	Level 6, Level 7, Level 8	Degree Apprenticeship, Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, Postgraduate Degree, PhD

28. UK Standard Occupation Classification that classifies jobs based on skill level and skill content. (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/standardoccupationalclassification/soc>).

Table 4: Annual Digital Demand by Skill Level

Skill Level	Baseline Digital (% of job adverts in occupations requiring baseline digital skills)	Specific Digital (% of job adverts in occupations requiring specific digital skills)	All Digital (% of of job adverts in occupations requiring digital skills in either category)
Low-Skill	74%	29%	77%
Middle-Skill	83%	59%	85%
High-Skill	75%	67%	83%
All Jobs	77%	56%	82%

Note: The two categories 'baseline digital' and 'specific digital' are not mutually exclusive. An occupation can require both baseline and specific digital skills.

Furthermore, during my first week of my course at university, the lecturer helped us to understand how to complete a personal development plan and I discovered that nowadays, employers are looking for other specific competencies when they recruit graduate people (Cameron, 2021).

The most important are:

1. Commercial awareness
2. Communication skills
3. Teamwork skills
4. Negotiation and persuasion skills
5. Problem solving ability
6. Leadership ability
7. Organisational skills
8. Perseverance and motivation
9. The ability to work under pressure
10. Confidence

Adapted from: www.target.co.uk (Nov 2012)

At the end of the lesson, I arrived home and I started to evaluate which skills have got and which one I need to achieve. I was surprised that I've got most of the skills that employers are asking for as I have more than 20 years work experience. I realised that I need to work on learning the fundamental of teamwork and improve my communication skills as English is not my first language and sometime, I don't feel confident when I express a concept because I think that is not well said.

In the third week of my course, I took a questionnaire about self-motivation and the result showed that I'm motivated but I could achieve much more in all area of my life. The motivation is the internal power that helps us to change and improve ourselves, for this reason it's important to increase the self-motivation which is strongly related to our success and progression. I need to increase the level of my motivation because sometimes I think that is impossible for me to achieve a goal because I don't believe enough in myself (Zimmerman et al. 1992)

My action plan is to achieve most of the skills that employers need in 1 year.

In three months, I will take some course on **LinkedIn** because as a higher education student most of the courses are free. While I was checking on Internet some other options to improve my digital competencies, I discovered that the government is offering **The Skills Toolkit**, a list of free courses to help people to learn and improve new skills or change job.

I found a free course **Computer Essentials** that will allow me to understand how to use some software and devices such as Microsoft, Excel, Photoshop and Illustrator.

Furthermore, **Google** is offering an interesting course that will help me to improve my communication skills and learn how to interact effectively at work. It's a 9 hours training course where I will find out how to hold a meeting, collect feedback, share ideas, present new concept to an audience. The positive aspect is that I can use the Google certificate to build my CV and demonstrate employers that I worked hard to build my skills and competencies.

The University of Leeds is offering a free training course about **Essential Skills for your Career Development** that, combined with my university course, will help me to identify the skills I need to learn in order to achieve my career purposes.

Regarding the self-motivation, in the next four months I will dedicate 30 minutes of my day to practice **mindfulness meditation**. Theoretically and empirically, mindfulness has been linked to psychological well-being. Mindfulness's components, such as consciousness and non-judgmental acceptance of one's present experience, are thought to be potentially effective practice to common types of psychological distress, such as anxiety, fear, frustration, and so on (Keng *et al.* 2011).

This practice, I've discovered, helps me avoid tension and overthinking. Every morning, I will close my eyes, take a few deep breaths in and out, and concentrate on the present moment without worrying about what is scaring me. I am sure that at the end of four months mindfulness meditation I will definitely feel more confident and I will believe more in myself.

I think the only think that could help me is to do these courses to understand my limits to focus on my goals, build confidence in the workplace, achieve career success using the right tools in order to develop my professional career.

2. Episode 2: Description, Feelings, Evaluation, Analysis, conclusion and Action Plan.

During the fourth week of my course module *Professional Career Development*, we started to analyse the recruitment process and other important tools in order to understand the fundamental aspects of the Task One which was the Role Play.

The lecturer well explained what we needed to do for this task that was basically a simulation of a real interview where each pair supposed to play a role of interviewed and interviewer in 10 minutes. I started to work on Task 1 with David, a Portuguese colleague, who supported me and helped me in each stage of the group work.

Since the beginning we started to share ideas and motivation in order to be ready for the week 10 when the Task 1 supposed to take place. A really helpful document that I found on Moodle was the Application Form (Appendix 1) that helped me to understand one of the most important stage of the recruitment process. In the application form we supposed to write down all of our personal details, qualifications, work experiences and skills.

The most useful week for the role play Task was the fifth one, where we analysed in the depth the selection interviews and how to efficiently prepare (Morgan, 2017).

The lecturer gave us some helpful tips to do a successful interview for example:

- Review your application
- Review the Job Specification
- Dress appropriately
- Consider the questions you might be asked
- Find out as much information as you can about the interview (date, time, location, interviewers etc.)

For the pair work, me and David decided to try inspiration from the list Typical interview questions and best responses on Moodle. At the first stage, we did a zoom videocall and we wrote down the questions for the interviewer role (Appendix 2).

In the next weeks, we practiced a lot in order to be more confident for the Role play Task (week 10). We have spent 30 minutes three days per week to practice with questions and responses.

At the beginning I felt frustrated and worried about this task as I've never talk in English in front of a big audience. David was really supportive as he always motivated me and gave me the right advices in order to deliver a successful Pair work.

The week ten, the Role Play task took place and everything went well as we practiced a lot and we felt confident enough to share our Pair work.

It was really interesting and useful this Task as we put together all the framework and tools that we learned during the course module. The lecturer was really satisfied about the interview Task as I was able to express myself in a clear way giving, times to times, some effective examples about my experience and skills.

I've could have been more specific when I was talking about my future plan as sometimes, I'm not able to express myself in the way that I want to.

From this experience I understood how important is to practice before an interview and how learn in details about the company and the job position that we are applying for. In the next few months, I will start to apply for vacancies as an Accountant Manager and I will definitely practice with some friends before taking an interview and try to give to the interviewer a clear vision of my future plans.

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Appendix 1

Private & Confidential **Application for Employment**

To ensure that you are able to complete the application form in full, please refer to the short-listing criteria on the job description.

Position Applied For	Accountant manager
How did you learn about this vacancy?	I have read an announcement on a sector newspaper

1. Personal Details			
Title	Mr		
Surname	cardinali		
Previous Name	alberto		
Forenames			
Address	Anthems way 7		
Post Code	E20 1 df		
Telephone number		Mobile No	07446802050
E-mail address	cardinaliuklondon@gmail.com		
National Insurance Number	234345545 SC		

1a. Additional Information

Do you hold a full, clean driving license valid in the UK?	Yes	X	No	
Do you have the right to work in the UK without restriction? (Proof of right to work in the UK ID will be required)	Yes	X	No	

2. Employment History

The last 5 years employment should be detailed, including any gaps in employment.
Please continue on a separate sheet if required.

Current or Most Recent Employment

Employers Name	WIDFORD SERVICES LTD			
Address	51 MEAD COURTS			
Postcode	E15 4LB			
Job Title	ACCOUNTANT			
Dates of Employment	From	2 MARCH 16	To	Date CORRENT
Reason for leaving	UPGRADE MY STATUS		Salary	45.000
Brief outline of main responsibilities and key duties	My typical job responsibilities include respecting deadlines, ensuring all executives' schedules are up to date, and ensuring executives receive all necessary reports, records, and documents on a regular basis. I also work to keep myself and the executive team up to date on any important company news. I accomplish this by using my advanced typing skills to take notes on a regular basis throughout the day.			

2. Employment History

The last 5 years employment should be detailed, including any gaps in employment.
Please continue on a separate sheet if required.

Current or Most Recent Employment

Employers Name	
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Address				
Postcode				
Job Title				
Dates of Employment	From		To	
Reason for leaving			Salary	
Brief outline of main responsibilities and key achievements				

Previous Employment				
Employers Name				
Job Title				
Dates of Employment	From		To	
Reason for leaving			Salary	
Brief outline of main responsibilities and key achievements				

Previous Employment				
Employers Name				
Job Title				
Dates of Employment	From		To	
Reason for leaving			Salary	
Brief outline of main responsibilities and key achievements				

Please continue on a separate sheet if required.

3. Formal Qualifications and Training & Development

Continue on a separate piece of paper if required. You will be required to provide original qualification certificates if successful.

Secondary Education Qualifications

Name of Qualification	Date Gained	Level	Grade	Awarding Body
High school diploma	1987	3	passed	Saint Elisabeth

Further/Higher Education Qualifications

Name of Qualification	Date Gained	Level	Grade	Awarding Body
Certified Management Accountant and Certified Financial Analyst (CFA)	2004	4	passed	CFA institute

Professional Qualifications

Name of Qualification	Date Gained	Level	Grade	Awarding Body

Chartered financial analyst	2004			CFA institute
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CPD / Training and Development

Brief description / course title	Date Taken
I worked 3 years as executive accountant. After this three year the chief upgrade me to manager of a small group of worker that are involved in fiscal and financial issues for some companies	2005

4. Interests and hobbies

Please provide details of your hobbies / leisure activities / voluntary work

I love cycling

I love some sport as cyclism, running and swimming.

5. Referencing

Referencing required for 2 full years (with a minimum of 2 references). At least 1 reference should be your current or most recent employer. Please confirm any existing personal / family relationship with existing PRC employees

References (Current or most recent employer)

Name of Referee	Giulio Teoli		
Job Title	Certified accountant		
Employers Name	Widford services ltd		
Address	51 mead court		
Postcode	E15 4lb		
Telephone Number		Ext. Number	
E-Mail Address	g.teoli@widford.co.uk		
Are you willing for this referee to be approached prior to interview?	/ Yes ☐ No ☐		

References

Name of Referee			
Job Title			
Employers Name			
Address			
Postcode			
Telephone Number		Ext. Number	
E-Mail Address			
Are you willing for this referee to be approached prior to interview?	Yes ☐ No ☐		

6. Reason for applying

Please detail below reasons for applying for the position including your skills, experience and attributes.

I enjoy working with numbers. Discovering legal ways to reduce tax expenses has always piqued my interest. Basically, I enjoy recording transactions, analyzing them, and looking for legal ways to save money for my employer.

My ambition is to one day work as a financial manager. However, before I can even apply for the management position. As an accountant in your firm, I hope to gain knowledge.

Please specify how you meet the criteria for this role.

As a managerial accountant, i will be responsible for managing the firm's or company's numerous transactions. One goal is to plan for or forecast future issue outcomes that the management team may face. Creating budgets and learning from past mistakes are also important tasks for those in the role of Managerial Accountant.

To be an effective decision-maker, like me, is another important skill for this job. Leading a company's finance department in financial decision making can mean the difference between solving problems and not. In these cases, the final decision is frequently reached through a combination of planning and intuition. Having a strong decision-maker on your team means you'll spend more time executing the plan.

7. Declaration

Please complete the following declaration and sign it in the appropriate place below.

I certify that:

- All the information given to me on this form is correct to the best of my knowledge
- All questions relating to me have been accurately and fully answered
- I possess all the qualifications which I claim to hold

Signed:

Date:18 april 21

Alberto Cardinali

Print Name:

Appendix 2

Role Play Task: Interview questions

INTERVIEWER: DAVID (5 MINUTES)

INTERVIEWED: ALBERTO (5 MINUTES)

1. Tell me about yourself
2. What is your greatest strength?
3. How do you handle stress and pressure?
4. What can you contribute to this company?
5. Where do you see yourself five years from now?

INTERVIEWER: ALBERTO (5 MINUTES)

INTERVIEWED: DAVID (5 MINUTES)

1. How would you describe yourself?
2. Do you work well with other people?
3. Why are you leaving your Job?
4. How do you plan to achieve your goals?
5. Why should we hire you?