

NAME: ADEBOMI SALU

STUDENT NUMBER: 1809923

MODULE: ACADEMIC AND EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS (BMSK4001)

LECTURER: SHAO-LAN YUEN

TERM 2

TASK:

Produce a reflective paper of 2,000 words, explaining how the learning in the module has helped you develop both your learning and employability skills. Reflect also on any skills gaps and suggest ways you might improve on these gaps.

INTRODUCTION

A reflective report about how my thinking has changed positively as a result of my learning experiences since the beginning of the second term of this course. I have had many 'light bulb' moments due to unlearning habits ingrained in me from my youth, to learning new and progressive habits and skills that would serve me in good stead for my future either in a new and exciting employment or as an entrepreneur.

The skills I will be reflecting on are:

- Communication (Negotiation) skills
- Presentation skills
- CV writing skills

I will be taking you through my journey in this learning process and liken it to 'The Lion King' story of Simba. Simba started his journey from being a wide-eyed cub to his destiny as a king. This will show an understanding of my progression from where I was at the start of this module, to where I am currently, and where I would definitely like to be in the nearest future.

I began my journey not really knowing what to expect and also thinking 'what exactly am I doing here?' as I have been in employment over many years, where certain skills and habits have formed. You will also learn about how each skill have been developed in my journey and also the skills gap remaining as work-in-progress. I have gone through the 'challenge' stage of my cycle of life, met my guide in form of my lecturer on this course. My fight stage have been in my head where I have battled decisions and ideals about the next stage of my life regarding starting a new business, reforming my old business or going back to employment.

This is a showcase of my growth from baby Simba to Simba the king.

According to Dweck (2017) in her book 'mindset' said that

"the view you adopt for yourself profoundly affects the way you lead your life and it can determine whether you become the person you want to be and accomplish your dreams".

A reflection of how as a result of learning these skills, I am taking bolder steps to achieving and accomplishing my dreams.

COMMUNICATION (NEGOTIATION) SKILLS

What are the most valuable communication skills?

Trust and Negotiation, knowing what the other person needs by listening to them, asking questions and showing that you care about what they are saying to you, are valuable communication skills. Trust is crucial to forming a connection with people, be it in a social environment, personal life and in the workplace. My understanding about 'Trust' and how essential it is in good communication, has developed through this course. I have become a lot more aware of conversations with people, listening more, showing interest and showing that I care about what they care about.

Similarly, I now understand that showing my employer that I can and will be able to remove stress from my employer's work-life thereby satisfying the work needs will ultimately build trust between me and my employer.

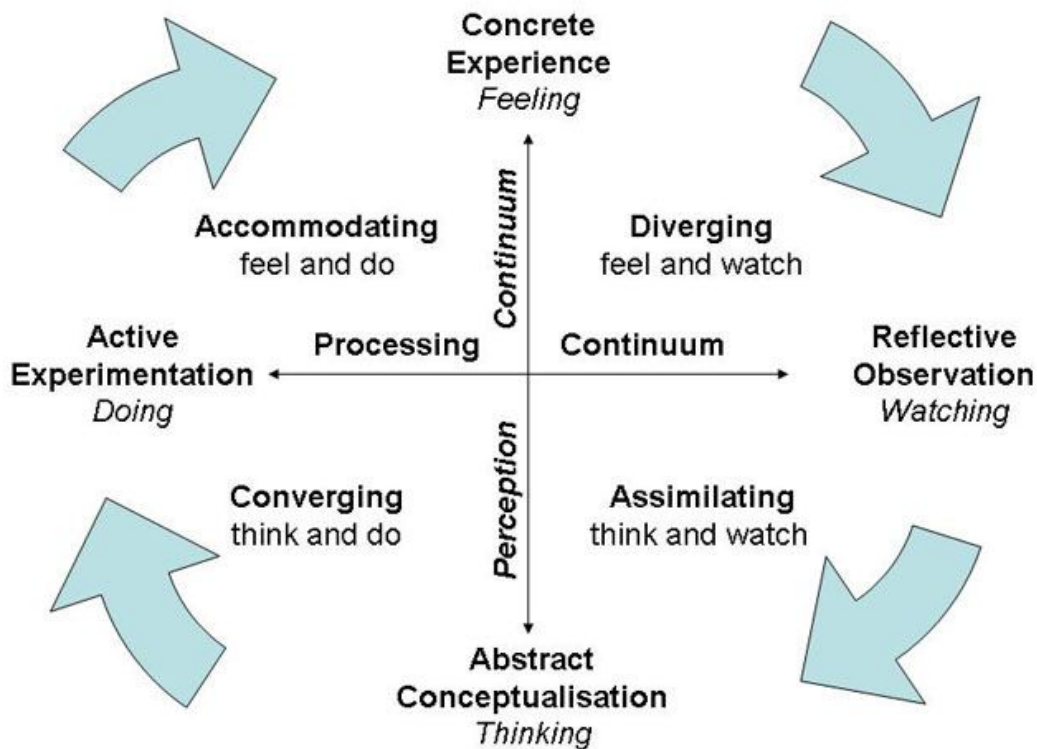
The next statement by Godin (2018), expresses this clearly:

"Trust is the only one that pays for the investment required. It is also the easiest to live with. A trusted marketer earns enrollment, makes promises and keeps it thereby earning more trust because with trust comes attention".

Furthermore, I have learnt many more lessons about the importance of good negotiation from the book 'Never Split the Difference' (Voss, C. 2016). Voss worked for the FBI, negotiating hostage situations and cited many of his real life experiences in overcoming and succeeding in those situations. Trust resonates throughout between the hostage-takers and the negotiators. There were also many key lessons and important principles that resonates with me in my journey to becoming an effective communicator. I understand that the language of negotiation in a major way is to get people to talk and think together, in essence, to build rapport which Oprah Winfrey has succeeded in mastering (Voss, C. 2016). Building empathy is another key lesson as he pointed out "empathy is the ability to

recognise the perspective of a counterpart and the vocalisation of that recognition”.

My learning journey in effect is further illustrated in the Kolb Model of Learning.



(simplypsychology.org)

Relating the above model to my journey in developing my communication skills, I can confidently say that I have progressed from the reflective observation stage by being present, participating and learning in lectures to the abstract conceptualisation stage in giving my project and goals a deep thought, which has progressed into the active experimentation stage by actually doing. This has now led to my experiencing the 'feeling' in the

concrete experience stage by the feedback I have been receiving on my blog and from word of mouth.

Bounds (2013), suggested that the only way to judge if communication has been effective is by the outcomes of your actions. I had always wanted to start a blog focusing on my thoughts and life experiences, and subsequently developing it into a platform where women can chat and exchange their life journey, thereby learning lessons and gaining continued growth in mindset. I have discovered through my new learning experiences that changing the way I think is essential to enable growth.

Although, Alfred Binet invented the IQ test with the intention of designing a new educational programme that would help children lagging behind in Paris public schools, the test has been over time, used in encapsulating children's intelligence, making us believe that it is fixed. (Dweck, 2017).

Dweck further quoted Binet as saying:

"Some philosophers believe that an individual's intelligence is a fixed quantity which cannot be increased. We must protest and react against this brutal pessimism with practice, training, and above all, method, we manage to increase our attention, memory, judgement and become more intelligent than we were before".

We can argue here that Binet and those philosophers are right in their belief however, there are more reasons that supports growth in intelligence through continued learning and even scientists are beginning to have a shift in their paradigm.

My behaviour and belief has changed as a result of learning communication skills, and one of the outcome of my action is the birth of my blog 'crowncoverme.wordpress.com.'

CrownCover Me

Where is your Eden?

≡ MENU



Are you ready for
more?

Eden, it's as simple as that!

Ultimately for me, 'crowncoverme' is as a result of "If not now, when?" I am showing up, receiving all the possibilities and rewarding my patience. (Godin, 2016).

PRESENTATION SKILLS

Presentation skills is another skill I have developed on this module.

There is a saying “ You cannot teach an old dog new tricks”.(Bounds & Ruttle, 2015). This idiom has been in existence since the olden days and it means that it becomes very difficult to change people’s formed behaviour and habits. If a person has been taught and has exhibited the same habit over and over again, it becomes ingrained in them and almost impossible to change. Is this so?

Contrary to that belief, especially in this new world that we live in, where knowledge is available at the tip of everyone’s fingers through the internet, I believe that old habits can definitely be learnt and changed. This was also suggested by Bounds & Ruttle (2015) in their book ‘Top Dog’ where it was pointed out that people can be taught new tricks. There, they highlighted crucial points where old habits can be unlearned by “breaking your me-too habits”.

Since the beginning of this module, I have been learning to break those ‘me-too’ habits and stand out in my presentation skills. I have always thought that I am very confident to stand in front of people and talk or even teach. What I have discovered now is that Presentation is not about me, it is about the audience, making sure they are provided with what they need. Godin (2019), in one of his online courses about ‘Presenting to Persuade’ pointed out that Presentation is a special and powerful opportunity to be heard and to show that you have listened and will make something happen.

Presentation can be in form of a Powerpoint presentation, interview for a new job or promotion at work or could be speaking as a leader of a group or team of people. Whatever kind of scenario is presented, there are some important points to understand in preparation. These are, finding out about who I will be presenting to (my audience), find out why I am presenting to them, what they would benefit or learn from my presentation and also

finding out what my audience's biggest problem is and how I would be able to help. In addition to those points, in order to make my presentation phenomenal, I have learnt that there are three salient actions to achieve. These are in getting my audience's Attention, getting their Interest and lastly, the Intention. By getting people's attention demonstrates they are listening, interest in wanting to know more and my intention is for my audience to change their mind or spend their money on my product.

Likewise I used the image below to illustrate the title 'Managing Conflict in the Workplace' which was my part of the team Presentation for one of our courses this term at the University. I could tell from the audience reaction that it drew their attention.

Managing Conflicts



(Shutterstock Images)

A lot of people present bad presentations due to many reasons. These could be that there are too many words on a slide, no interaction, not thinking through the content and audience, and also making the presentation about you, to mention a few. (Bounds, 2013). Having said

that, he then suggested building your snowball by creating Presentations that is impressive so it works.

Bound's five suggestions sequence are firstly, to direct their feet with a clear 'call to action'. Simply means, give them something to do, leading to action. Secondly, have a capturing riveting title. For example, "Who Is My Boss?" was our lecturer's first question to us and this was captivating enough to command everyone's attention (I must point out my observation here and that is her lecture has been the most attended and most paid attention since I started my courses at this University). The third point is to employ an attention-grabber where you can ask them questions or 'throw chocolates'. Following that is to nourish them with detailed content during the delivery and lastly, remind the audience of key points.

Furthermore, in any form of Presentation, verbal communication is the most powerful tool because the voice can deliberately cause the recipient to trust or not to trust, as trusting is an essential ingredient for impactful Presentation (Voss, 2017).

With this in mind, Olivia Mitchell (2018) explored some of Seth Godin's key recommendations about Presentations. She emphasised that his "ideas that spread, win" being clear and memorable. She furthermore pinpointed a few of Godin's recommendations;

- Affirming the key message at the beginning of the Presentation.
- Repeat key points at every opportunity (as opposed to Bound's suggestion the last thing to do).
- Show evidence as support for your key information.
- Make certain that your examples matches the contents of the Presentation and that it counts too.

In light of all of these, I believe my confidence has developed even more, equipped with all I have learnt and still learning from all the lectures we have had and the reference books that I have acquired since the start of this course, regarding my Presentation skills.

CV WRITING SKILLS

What is the point of a CV?

It is to get my prospective employer to read it within five seconds. It is also to enable me secure an interview and to create a 'Red Box' impression amongst the other multitude of CVs.

Curriculum Vitae is mostly shortened as CV and by definition, it is a written document of a person's qualifications, past and current experiences, skills and achievements for a job application (English Dictionaries, 2019).

CV writing is my skill gap remaining out of all the skills we have learnt on this module and I say this because though I am confident in producing a brilliant CV, I have not worked on mine simply because my goal is to become self-employed by the end of my first year at this University.

However, if by then my plans change, I believe that I am sufficiently equipped to write an impressive CV for new employment. One that sticks out and is remarkable like a purple cow (Godin, 2008).

In the course of this module, I have had to unlearn past CV writing skills where emphasis is completely laid on me and not the employer and grow my mindset by learning that it is significant not to talk about myself. Employers would notice when I show in my CV that I understand what they want from their employees because all that matters to them is to get results from me.

Similarly, I must be able to show that I will save them money and time, and also make them money as I ultimately make them look good.

In essence, I believe that I am sufficiently equipped to produce a great CV when the time becomes apparent.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I can confidently say that there has been a significantly change and shift in my mindset. According to Dweck (2017), studies indicate that people normally underestimate their abilities and performances and this is because of their fixed mindset. However, people with the growth mindset would try and try again until they succeed. They would step out of their comfort zone and open their mind to learning.

This is what I have done and still learning as it is manifesting through the skills analysed in this task.

“The view you adopt for yourself profoundly affects the way you lead your life. It can shape who you become and assist in accomplishing your values” Dweck (2017).

I am on the path to accomplish.

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