

Portfolio

Component 1

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ECGE4002P

Academic study skills for students

1905098

**A portfolio of tasks reflecting the skills, knowledge
and dispositions needed for HE study**

Task 1- Developing your skills: vision of success as a student teacher

My skills audit

SELF-EVALUATION

Current skills and qualities

Pages 12-45 are not included in this book preview.

People

- ☒ Ability to get on with people from different backgrounds
- ☒ Understanding other people's points of view
- ☐ Sensitivity to cultural differences
- ☒ Dealing with the general public
- ☒ Teamwork and collaboration
- ☐ Networking
- ☒ Managing or supervising others' work
- ☒ Teaching, training or mentoring others
- ☒ Negotiating and persuading
- ☒ Helping others to arrive at decisions
- ☒ Consideration of others' feelings
- ☐ Caring for others
- ☒ Supporting and motivating others
- ☒ Understanding others' body language
- ☐ Coping with 'difficult' people
- ☒ Speaking clearly and to the point
- ☒ Audience awareness
- ☐ Taking direction from others
- ☒ Giving constructive feedback
- ☒ Leadership skills
- ☐ Other:

Activities and tasks

- ☒ Creativity, design and layout
- ☐ Innovation and inventiveness
- ☒ Ability to see the 'whole picture'
- ☒ Argument and debate
- ☒ Seeing patterns and connections
- ☒ Attention to detail
- ☐ Searching for information
- ☒ Classifying and organising information
- ☒ Making decisions
- ☐ Managing change and transition
- ☒ Setting priorities
- ☒ Working out agendas
- ☐ Organising work to meet deadlines
- ☒ Facilitating meetings
- ☐ Reading complex texts
- ☒ Computer literacy
- ☒ Technological skills
- ☒ Using social networking tools
- ☒ Working with numbers
- ☒ Selling
- ☒ Problem-solving
- ☐ Quick thinking
- ☒ Practical skills
- ☒ Understanding quickly how things work
- ☐ Seeing practical applications
- ☐ Writing reports or official letters
- ☐ Languages
- ☒ Enterprise and entrepreneurship
- ☒ Business and financial skills
- ☐ Managing difficult situations, emergencies and crises
- ☐ Other:

Personal

- ☒ Setting my own goals
- ☒ Working independently
- ☐ Maintaining a high level of motivation
- ☒ Taking responsibility for my own actions
- ☒ Learning from my mistakes
- ☒ Willingness to take risks and experiment
- ☒ Assertiveness
- ☒ Determination and perseverance
- ☒ Self-reliance
- ☒ Recognising my own needs
- ☐ Taking care of my health and well-being
- ☐ Staying calm in a crisis
- ☐ Coping skills and managing stress
- ☐ Other:

Chapter 2

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What success means to me

Success is a thing of perception; my idea and vision of success may contrast to someone else's. As a main goal for me, I feel that I'll be successful if I achieve a first class degree and go on to get a job as a teacher. This won't be possible without a lot of progression and success throughout the 3 years of my degree. Therefore, based on my recent skills audit, I feel that I'll become successful if I use my time wisely and take initiative to learn about the things that I'm currently not sure about such as networking, and sensitivity to cultural differences; my awareness of this is very poor. Success to me means that I will be able to complete a skills audit at the end of the year, and see at least another 3 boxes ticked. It means that in the 3 years I will have most, if not all, of those boxes on the skills audit ticked. This will mean that I've completed my targets to the level of satisfaction I feel is fitting, and therefore I will be successful. I will be successful if I am able to use all of the resources available to me, effectively and efficiently throughout my degree. Success will mean I'm able to use these not just in my degree, but once I've become a teacher. I'll be able to recall plenty of resources to help with my lesson planning and other responsibilities as a teacher. Finally, I believe that I will be successful if I'm happy with the work I'm producing at university, and consequently achieve the outcome that I'm aiming towards.

Task 2 - Developing Critical Thinking

Cottrell (2005) suggests that critical thinking is a complex process of deliberation which involves a wide range of skills and attitudes, such as: being able to read between the lines, seeing behind surfaces and identifying false or unfair assumptions. To be able to think critically, we must use reasoning and rational thought. This will allow us to critically evaluate not only the beliefs and actions of others, but ourselves too. Many of the skills needed for critical thinking are actually basic skills that we use everyday unknowingly- reasoning being one of them. As Cottrell comments:

We may consider that it's a cold day. Someone who disagrees may ask why we believe this. We may use evidence such as a thermometer and observation of weather conditions. Our reasons may be that temperature is low and there's ice on the ground (Cottrell, 2005, p3).

Cottrell expresses an example here of how we use critical thinking skills in our everyday lives, in the most basic form. The skill of critical thinking can bring many benefits to someone's everyday life, such as improved attention and observation, and more focused reading. It's argued that critical thinking can also benefit emotional self management, and can "engage emotions and even passionate responses" (Cottrell, 2005, p5). Although it does take time to do due to its precision, it can actually save time in the long run once you've got the skills to do it, as you'll be able to pinpoint relevant information more effectively and efficiently.

In order to be effective in thinking critically, it's very useful to be self aware as you need to make accurate judgements, reflecting on and evaluating things such as our own preconceptions, and prejudices. To be able to question our beliefs is something that takes time to be comfortable with, as our beliefs are part of our identity, and to question our identity is not a natural thing for us to do.

Students need to develop a good ability to think critically so they can really question the theories and arguments of their subjects, in order to look further than what is initially presented to them. Some students struggle to evaluate the work of others fully before applying the results of their research. Bodner (1988) suggests that chemistry students are unable to apply their knowledge outside the domain in which it was learnt, as they know

without understanding. Instead of focusing on calculations in books, Bodner (1988) suggests that students should be questioning, 'how do we know...?'

There are a number of barriers to critical thinking that many people face, such as: a misunderstanding of what's meant by criticism, reluctance to critique experts, mistaking information or misunderstanding, and many more. The only way to overcome these barriers is to actually critically evaluate ourselves and ask, 'what are my weaknesses? Which of these barriers stop me from executing my highest potential of critical thinking?' Once we have distinguished our weaknesses and targeted them in a way in which we can measure our improvement continuously over a period of time, and compare with our initial position, we will be able to flourish as critical thinkers.

Task 3 - Developing Critical Writing

What I think about Education in Wales

Education in Wales at this current time is facing a funding crisis and it's beginning to implement an impact on students' test results, the volume of teachers applying for jobs and overall motivation of teachers and teaching assistants, following the huge job cuts. The current curriculum dates back to 1988 and in my opinion, with things being added in over the years, it's become too overcrowded with too many things to focus on, and too outdated. As technology progresses, we need to progress with it. I believe that the current curriculum isn't allowing children the freedom to do this.

Wales hasn't had the best track record for the PISA test results in comparison to the rest of the UK. There have been many occasions in the news where Wales has been cited as performing poorly in the PISA tests. BBC Wales reported in 2013 that Wales had, 'fallen behind the rest of the UK significantly in reading, maths and science for the third time' (BBC Wales, 2013: 1). It's clear that a new curriculum is definitely necessary.

The new curriculum coming in 2022, based on the 'Successful Futures' report by Donaldson, sets out to focus on six areas of learning: 'Expressive Arts, Health and Wellbeing, Humanities, Maths and Numeracy, Science and Technology, and Language, Literacy and Communication' (Education Wales, 2019). The official first draft for 'Successful Futures,'

suggests that these areas of learning and experience set out to help learners realise the main purposes of the curriculum. The four purposes are:

Ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives.

Enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work.

Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world.

Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valuable members of society. (Education Wales, 2019)

The new curriculum has been designed and developed around these purposes, as they are the main focus of 'Successful Futures.' I believe that the expressive arts being emphasised as one of the six areas is something that will become extremely beneficial in time, as it's been proven that children who actively partake in expressive arts will develop more confidence, a better ability for public speaking, and be able to develop transferable skills.

One of the main things that's staying in the new curriculum is the foundation phase. This is something that has recently been implemented, within the past ten years. The foundation phase has successfully introduced seven new statutory areas for learning. Despite the huge change that this framework implemented, the majority of practitioners encouraged these changes to the curriculum. Although it has been deemed as successful so far, some practitioners may disagree, with 19% and 22% of practitioners saying they 'felt that there was no real difference in improvement of Language, Literacy and Communication and Mathematical Development Areas (Taylor, Rhys, Waldron, 2016, p.305). This suggests that the Foundation Phase framework isn't completely beneficial for all practitioners currently. I believe that the Foundation Phase framework will only improve with the new curriculum being developed, and that when all teachers have received the correct and complete training for this framework, it will perform to its highest potential.

In conclusion, I believe that education in Wales is currently outdated and ineffective, and the new curriculum is extremely necessary.

Reference List

BBC Wales (2013) *PISA ranks Wales' education the worst in the UK*. 3 December. Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-25196974> (accessed 1st November 2019).

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