

Academic and employability skills
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Introduction

In this academic report I will reflect on my learning during the Academic and Employability Skills module. This module is part of my studies for my Certificate in Higher Education in Skills for Workplace and the first step in my goal to obtain a Bachelor Degree in Business Management.

Personal development can be realised through learning. My decision to enrol to the University for a Business Management course was a defining moment in my life towards the self development in order to gain the knowledge to improve my writing skills, my communication skills, my presentation skills, but also to increase my chances to obtain a job position in management and in parallel to develop my own business.

I will use Borton's model of reflection which will give a structure to my reflection to highlight my insights regarding the learning process. My reflection will refer to the theory and concepts learned in the module and I will select several topics covered during the class. The learning process was realised through the learning materials provided by the lecturer who explained the concepts and theories, but also participating at the in-class activities.

In my reflection I will refer to CV writing, Cover letter writing and Public speaking and giving presentations topics which I consider it offered me the best tools to obtain the job I intend to and follow my career aspiration in management roles, but also to help the developing of my family business.

Reflection

Following the learning process during the Academic and Employability skills module I will use the reflective writing to form a reflection regarding my experience. I will use a simple model of reflection for a more effective reflection and to maintain my focus on the output of the experience. For my reflection I will use Borton's model of reflection. This model of reflection is based on three main cue questions "What?", "So what?", "Now what?". First question "what" refers to the description of the experience and in this stage I will describe my learning experience related to the selected topics CV writing, Cover letter writing and Public speaking and giving presentations. The next question "So what?" requires an analysis of the experience and this helps my reflection to provide an analytical perspective. The last cue question "Now What?" has a concluding character, but is the most important as it involves the reflector to decide what to do next, how to act and how to use the knowledge gained

from the experience (Borton, 1970). It will help me formulate future perspectives regarding my personal development taking in consideration my learning during the course and in relation to the selected topics.

I will start to discuss the first selected topic which is CV writing. The first cue question “What?” involves a descriptive approach of the experience. The CV writing topic was part of the learning materials from the module covered in week 7. We were asked to send our CV’s and Cover letters to the tutor. During the class we were presented using power point slides how to write a CV, which is the best and most effective approach, we were shown CV samples, tutorial videos, but also we did practical exercises.

The next stage of this reflection model “So what?” analyses the experience. I realised that prior this experience I did not have the most organised CV. My background could have been an impacting factor as English is not my first language and some of my knowledge regarding the concept were different than the knowledge gained through this module.

The CV (Curriculum Vitae) is defined as the brief description of the work experience, education, existing skills and aptitudes which is used to apply to a job position. The CV is the first contact with a potential employer. That is why a CV should be the first opportunity to impress, to offer a picture of what you can do, what you are good at, giving the employer a first insight of your capabilities. Having a good CV is vital as it separates successful job applications to the unsuccessful ones. It helps the applicant to be considered for the job and being offered an interview (Open Edu, 2020).

Learning about CV writing during class, offered me better understanding of the topic as we were able to ask questions and participate actively. I gained knowledge regarding how a good CV should look like, that it should be accurate and presented factually over no more than 2 pages. It should convey an image of you as an employee and it should be targeted to the role you are applying. Adopting a concise and engaging organisation of the CV will maintain the focus of the reader. There are several types of CV’s according to the level of study, experience or types of skills: traditional CV, functional CV, non-graduate CV, graduate CV, unemployed CV. There are two main types of CV’s which are most used to apply to a job, the traditional CV which is the same to chronological CV and the skills based CV or the functional CV (Siddique, 2004).

My previous knowledge on the topic involved what a CV should include, but I did not realised how important is to make it look professional and what is the best way to organise the information I wanted to have it in my CV.

The last stage of Borton's model of reflection involves answering the question "Now what?". My learning regarding this topic was improved and it gave me the tools to create a good CV that will help me towards my career progression. I will start my CV with a short paragraph presenting myself. I will continue my CV with organising my work experience chronological, starting with the most recent one, I will have an Education section where I will add the current course which I am doing and I will present my skills and aptitudes in a concise manner that will reflect accurately my potential input to an organisation. In the end of my CV I will make the employer aware that references are available on request.

The next topic Cover letter writing is in connection to the CV writing as often when applying for a role you are required to send a cover letter as well. Using the same model of reflection I will apply Borton's cue questions to reflect on this experience. "What?" refers to my learning experience to the Cover letter writing topic. This topic was covered during the class using power point presentation with knowledge on the topic. We were asked to send our cover letters to the lecturer through email. "So what?" at this stage of my reflection I will refer to the new knowledge gained in class on Cover letter writing. According to Morgan (2017) a cover letter is a business letter sent to the employer together with the CV. This is an introductory written communication with the employer in which the applicant explains why is suitable for the job and it supplements the information offered in the CV. A cover letter is addressed to the employer if the name is known or it is used a general formulation eg.: Dear Sir, specifying to which job position was made the applications, as the employer could have more positions to fill. The letter should continue with introductory information about the applicant, education level, work experience and expertise. The next part of the cover letter should offer more details that would enhance applicants capabilities aligning with the organisation needs and objectives. There can be used tools such as STAR which points situation, task, action and results. Highlighting the great input as a potential employee should be emphasised with exemplification from the organisation activity and direction. The cover letter should end with a "call to action" paragraph that will enhance the applicant enthusiasm to obtain an interview and will conclude the letter thanking for the time given by the employer to read it (Yate, 2018).

"Now what?" the last stage of this reflection it is more revealing for this topic as my previous knowledge towards this topic was at low levels. I knew the term, but I did not know the importance of a cover letter, I did not even know how it should be written a Cover letter. It taught me to how to write a cover letter and I will be confident to write a Cover letter if required. I found very clear and helpful the information on the topic given in class as we were explained with great details and

examples what each paragraph should look like and what kind of information should incorporate. The last topic selected for my reflection Public speaking and giving presentations was realised in week 6 through power point presentation from our lecturer and involved practical exercises, videos, discussions and feedback from the tutor regarding our individual presentation which was part 1 of our module assessment.

“So what?” In my opinion all students paid greater attention to this topic as it was part of our short time objective to pass the model and have a successful presentation required for part 1 of the assignment. Therefore I was very interested in the session related to public speaking and giving presentations. The learning materials on this topic covered a multitude of details related to actions prior giving the presentation. Aspects such as checking of the equipment used to give the presentation, dressing code, pros and cons for using helping materials such as handouts for the audience, having a catching opening to attract audience attention, having a clear voice tone to ensure that all the audience can hear you. I learned that when presenting it should be use a natural pace of speaking, with appropriate pauses and maintaining eye contact throughout the audience. In relation to the content, the presenter should not read the slides, but it can use notes to keep the flowing of the presentation. The presenter should allocate time to address questions at the end of the presentation (Splane, 2006). A critical incident in my experience was related to my individual presentation when I practiced my presentation to my friend. I found it more difficult to express myself in front of someone and that put more weight on me thinking of how I will act when I will give the presentation for my exam with the lecturer and my colleagues as an audience and with more pressure as I was being marked.

Further that I realised that I need more practice and that helped me and I consider that it had a positive impact on my work and improved my experience.

“Now what?” the final stage of my reflection of this experience highlights how the knowledge about this topic helps my development. Following this experience I learned how to give a good and successful presentation which will help me in my future job interviews or even after obtaining a job, if the role involves public speaking and giving presentation. I will know how to make prior preparations, how to gain the audience attention and that will help me with my career plans, but also it will benefit my personal business as I will be able to promote the business more effectively, having gained this knowledge.

Conclusion

This module was more than learning about concepts and theories, it improved me as an individual and my self awareness, but it also provided me the methods to create the best opportunities for my career path.

Participating actively to the seminars and group work, was part of my self motivation to achieve success during my learning. The course enhanced my understanding of employability skills and the learning process provided me the tools to promote myself, it provided me the required confidence to pursue my goals and objectives.

The multitude of knowledge and skills gained through this module related to academic writing, reporting, public speaking, reflective writing, analytical thinking build my confidence for my writing skills but also for my spoken skills.

I consider that we had the best academic support through our lecturer which taught and guided us and though the availability of the diverse learning resources on Moodle.

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