

Academic And Employability skills

Term 2 October 2020

Student Name: Dorothy Antwi

Student ID: 1906884

Module Code: BMSW4001

Lecturer Name: Shao- Lan

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Task 1

Introduction

Employability is a significant aspect of obtaining and maintaining job opportunity by being capable of gaining employment and also develops the ability to keep fulfilling the work. On the other hand, employability entails having set of skills, understanding, knowledge and personal attributes relevant for choosing and securing job opportunities which will satisfy the needs and also help in achieving success in a career (Mishra, 2014). The aim of this report is to explore the different dimensions and facets of employability developing themes based on articles that encompass the development of skills, career development, and continuous learning of achieving different employability skills.

Time management skills for employability

Time management is also an important skill that needs to be acquired by professionals to gain success and fame in the workplace. Individual possessing good time management skills are able to gain success in terms of completing their work on time as well as utilise their productivity to attain positive results. There are numerous ways through which individuals in their employability could manage time management effectively such as through setting up of SMART goals, creating logs and preparing weekly & daily to-do lists. The article by Lieback (2019) on ***“Deepen Your Focus: Five Time Management Skills That Work”*** focuses on highlighting the importance of time management skills in the workplace. The overall analysis of the article discusses the inappropriate use of time by modern-day workforce by spending the majority of their time on social media feeds and responding to emails. It is one of the challenging tasks for people at work to prioritise their work and develop an appropriate personalised strategy as they are unable to recognise their day-to-day threats which negatively impacts on their overall performance (Lieback, 2019). The article has stressed upon highlighting five major activities which need to be followed by individuals to successfully manage and utilise time in their employability through creating distraction-free zones, customising weekly and morning preparation rituals, blocking off daily time, scheduling mandatory downtime and letting others know about your intentions. All of

these tactics if appropriately done can benefit people in employment to perform more task in the stipulated time period and would also be able to manage stress to balance both personal and professional life.

Personal and Professional Development to strengthen transferable skills

There has been a strong competition both in the academic as well as the employment field which has significantly affected the way the recruiters have been hiring candidates. The article *“Changing your career: How to identify your transfer skills”* authored by Bacchus (2010) has highlighted the situation of the hiring process when it came to the recession. The article reveals that there is an impossibility gauging the job seekers in terms of changing sectors. The recruiters have been hiring the candidates with most relevant experiences in the sector along with the candidates possessing wider employability skills sets across different areas of work. The different industry has been facing talent shortages and skills gaps which potentially act as an opportunity for the job seekers to strengthen and make use of their transferable skills to change their careers. Scanning through the job market, it was found that firms have been searching for candidates from marketing, sales, R&D and HR fields possessing global experience. In order to be ahead of the competition and narrow the skills gaps, it is important to assess own experience and skills and engage in an essential exercise to strengthen the employability and transferable skills to stand out from the course. The article has emphasised on the relevance of career coaching citing the example of a recent client called Alex who had been working with corporate consulting for blue-chip multinationals. To audit own skills, Alex had focused on series of questions like things you love to do, aspects you are good at, personal qualities, specific work experience and dream organisations one wants to work for (Bacchus, 2010). The purpose of this skills audit is also to understand the target organisation as well as determine the strategic value that one could provide the organisation. Further, the assessment includes orienting goals towards skills with personal milestones much of which coincides with the idea of personal and professional development (PPD). It requires job seekers to develop a PPD plan to develop and strengthen the transferable skills like communication, time management, decision making and others to achieve success in employment. Despite the critical environments, Alex had developed

a successful career change campaign by focusing on her personal interests, packaged transferable skills and a well-honed plan to suit the needs of the prospective employers. Thus, the decision to change career is a step-by-step route that incorporates specific skills goals and a time plan as a part of personal and professional development.

CV writing to stand out

In terms of improving chances of employability, it is necessary to learn and acquire skills related to CV writing. In academic term, CV or curriculum vitae refers to the document aimed at sharing personal and professional details such as qualifications & job experiences of the candidate to the employer. So, it becomes important for an individual to design and develop a CV so that it can attract the attention of employers quickly. The article *“How to Write a Resume That Stands Out”* Gallo (2014) also focuses on highlighting important points that need to be taken into consideration while completing an appropriate CV or Resumes. The article reveals that individuals looking to acquire employability often face challenges in assessing what should be the appropriate length of a professional CV. There are numerous debates wherein different experts are of different opinion whether to put a summary on top, personal interest should be included or excluded and CV should be one or two pages long. All of these questions create confusion among professionals thereby reducing their chances to make a good first impression to the employer. However, it could be noticed that the author of the article has emphasised on discussing views and opinions of experts around the world and their views and perception to make a unique CV. Debates about CV writing from experts such as Jane Heifetz from Right Resumes and John Lees from Knockout CV have stressed on highlighting the fact that CV should reflect the thinking of the individual and should also be in preference of the hiring manager. On the contrary, John Lees is of the opinion that CV’s should be treated as a marketing document and should be targeted to respective audiences such as hiring manager (Gallo, 2014). Furthermore, the author has pointed out certain tricks and strategies in CV for individuals looking to increase their chances of employability such as through customising it so that different sets of CV should be sent out to recruiters for different job application. The author also feels that a summary should be placed on the top so that the recruiting manager is aware of the experiences

and skills beforehand scanning through the entire resume. Furthermore, ordering all the points in the CV without worrying about gaps should be done so that appropriate information related to employability is presented in the front to make a positive first impression.

Components of an effective cover letter for seeking employment

Cover letter in the field of employment is also referred to as professional business letter which should be submitted alongside CV to the recruiting manager. It also acts as an introductory note to the prospective employer wherein personal details and with the contribution which could be made towards the company should be placed to the concerned authorities during the interview.

“Your cover letter must include these 3 things” is an article by Kaufman (2020) is also based on highlighting the important points which should be included in the cover letter to make it more attracting and appealing for the recruiting manager. The author has revealed that there are numerous companies that do not require candidates to share their cover letter along with CV whereas there are companies that feel cover letter reflects the true personality of individual towards the job. Thus, in regards to gain success in employability, it is necessary to develop cover letter by keeping in mind of three major points such as explanation to relate skills to the job, excitement about the job position and conducting relevant homework about the job role and requirement (Kaufman, 2020). It is necessary for individuals to make their cover letter more attractive as it is considered to be an elaborative form of a CV wherein it becomes crucial to highlights personal skills and attributes and how it would be used to enhance organisational performance. Moreover, cover letters should also express the excitement of the candidate so that the hiring manager may feel that need to hire immediately.

Sharpening Public Speaking Skills

One of the crucial employability skills of a candidate seeking for a job is effective communication which comes with delivering a presentation and effective public speaking ability alongside interaction with professionals and colleague. As discussed employers and recruiters have been hiring candidates with exceptional transferable skills, public speaking has gained prominence over the years shedding its way out of the communication arena. From the article,

“Four Steps to Sharpen your Public-Speaking Skills” by (Gallo, 2020), the 10,000-hour rule of practice time has been focused through Anders Ericsson’s research on the book, Peak. In this article, the author had highlighted the aspect of ‘Deliberate’ practice which is considered to be a practice that entails a purpose which is guided by a coach or a teacher. It has been noted that the author believes that if one engages in the practice of skills, then learning time can be reduced which is also applicable for the public-speaking skills. The article further explains the four steps to deliberate or make a purposeful practice to improve public-speaking skills. In this regards, the first step is to define the goals which are significant in improving any skills. In terms of public speaking skills, the goal could be set at practice the speech without referring to the notes. The second step is to set a practice time and organise the practice focusing on the time. This could be done by scheduling the speech and/or presentation rehearsal and ensuring that the time is selected based on the highest energy one possesses with no scope of interruption. The third step is to actively seek feedback which could be a part of the rehearsal strategy. Performing in front of small groups and then asking for feedback could be a significant practice to learn the weaknesses and then move onto work with it(Gallo, 2020). The last step is moving into a comfort zone which is essential for public speaking. Excelling in public speaking requires letting off the fear of presenting in front of strangers or audience who one may not know. Practising speech in front of a dog or peer could be beneficial in stretching out of the uncomfortable zone. Thus, the deliberate practice focused on with feedback and the steps could help in developing the public speaking skills of a job-seeking candidate and professionals.

Analysing own employability skills

While undertaking the academic and employability skills, I have realised that the course has delved deeper into the professional career and the role of employability in understanding how the job environment is challenging. In regards to this, I have conducted a self-assessment using the personal SWOT analysis and realised that I possess some employability skills which could be essential for my professional career. I have observed that I demonstrate effective communication skills as I can interact with tutors and peer without any hesitation and develop interpersonal relationships. On the other hand, I also possess effective team working skills as I work in teams

and achieve team goals by working collaboratively. However, I realised that the course also highlighted the time management skills which is a crucial employability skill. In times of delivering individual assignments and responding to the emails and calls of my friends, I fail to manage time. Therefore, I need to develop my time management skills to manage all tasks and delivery within the deadline.

Conclusion

Thus, the overall analysis highlights that individuals need to possess good CV writing alongside cover letter writing skills in order to gain recognition among hiring managers. It should be noted that in order to acquire good employment, it becomes crucial to attaining time management skills, transferable skills and public speaking skills.

Task 2

Introduction

The course has covered different topics on employability which has been effective in understanding the skills and personal attributes graduates must possess or develop to gain employment and serve the workforce, the community and the economy. To better understand the learning and outcomes of the course, reflection on some of the topics explored in the module has been explored in this report using a reflective model. Five topics have been selected for the reflective progression which includes employability, CV writing, cover letter writing and reflective writing.

Employability Skills

Kolb's reflective model has been applied to understand the learning experience from the employability topic.

Concrete Experience: Before undertaking the course, I had limited knowledge of employability skills and other concepts. I thought employability is something to do with employment and since I am a student I thought I have time to understand this concept. I liked and was quite intrigued by the class that explored the concept of employability as I was able to learn that employability involves skills and personal attributes. Further, I was able to understand and clarify the topic when I learned some of the examples of employability skills such as communication, general awareness, and interpersonal skills. I liked where the tutor explained each of the skills and its significance in employability. However, I did not like the numeracy skills to fit in the employability as I found that this skill could not be applicable to all professions and communicated the same to the class. For example, Group Task of the job description, I found that the office manager could demonstrate effective employability skills and distinguish the chartered management account to possess the numeracy skills. The learning from the module was interesting and useful because it helped me to learn about the crucial employability skills and also self-assess the skills that I possess.

Reflective Observation: After taking the class, I found that the good thing about the course was that it has helped us to develop professionally and make us aware about the practical transferable skills that are significant when seeking for jobs. However, the bad thing about the topic on employability was quite descriptive and did not engage in any practical exercise for use to understand the demonstration of the skills when in a professional setting.

Abstract Conceptualisation: Reflecting on the topic of employability I found that it helped us to understand not only the employability skills but also the responsibilities of different professions. the purpose of this group task was to understand the job responsibilities and align with the employability skills. According to Suleman (2018), employability skills are a turning point into a student's career when transitioning towards employment opportunities. As a student, I have realised that I need to assess my personal and professional front to better understand the skills that I possess and that which needs improvement. I have learned from the experience, that all skills are relevant in different job responsibilities as it is uncertain as to what one would have to face in future.

Active Experimentation: Applying the ideas gained from the learning experience, I could say that I learn and develop significant employability skills. In this regards, I need to improve my researching skills to research more on employability skills and formulate a personal and professional development plan to attain personal goals.

CV writing

In reflective on CV writing, Kolb's reflective model has been used.

Concrete Experience: Before the class, I had limited knowledge about CV writing and I used to refer to samples on the internet to write my own CV. I liked the class when the CV writing was discussed as I learned not only about what CV is, but I was also able to learn about the structure of the CV. I have been facing difficulty in looking for a job as I applied for more than three hundred positions but failed. This topic had been useful for me as I realised that the information that my CV was providing the employers was ineffective and I learned that having a personal statement is significant while including all work experience and qualification makes the CV

stand out. In one of the class exercise as a reflection on progress, I have explored my problem to the tutor who guided me to learn about CV writing.

Reflective Observation: The good thing about the topic was that I could learn the CV writing techniques and structure and could immediately make changes to my CV. However, after completing the class I realised that I still need to develop my CV as I need to write about my personal statement and include references or the sentence “Reference available on request”.

Abstract Conceptualisation: From the course, I have learned that it is essential to curve an effective and appealing CV for the recruiters which increase the chances of being called for interviews. According to Forsberg (2016), CV writing is embedded within the notion of meritocracy which questions the decisive results of merits and the accorded value of it in the employment contexts. I learned that building a strong CV requires organising, structuring, packaging and mediating the content in the right way to document the qualification and work experience vital for a professional career.

Active Experimentation: Based on the learning experience, I could say that I have learned to structure and mediate the content in the CV which I believe to be appealing to the recruiters. However, going through my CV I observed that still need to improve it by incorporating some more information to offer a professional look to the document. In this regards, I must research the top CVs and develop my CV writing capability.

Cover Letter writing

In order to analyse my personal experiences on cover letter writing, I would be using Kolb’s reflective model. The reflective model into four stages such as

Concrete Experience: I possessed less knowledge and understanding of the difference between CV and personal statement. I always felt that CV and cover letter to be the same thereby does not emphasise on the need to develop cover letter. But, after engaging in the course, I was shocked to see that cover letter is more important than a CV in terms of making a positive impression towards the recruiter. I liked the class as my professor was very helpful in terms of making us

understand the technique of writing a cover letter by including all major points such as work experience and professional skills & attributes. After attending the course, I understood the concept of cover letter writing by eliminating unnecessary information which I was using previously. For example, during the class activity, I was the first in the class to submit a professional cover letter on the project manager job due to which I was awarded additional marks. The only thing that I disliked about the class is that my queries were solved all the time due to the presence of numerous students.

Reflective Observation: The good thing that I liked about the course is that it benefited me to distinguish between CV and cover letter. The course made me aware to avoid the use of unnecessary information related to hobbies and personal interest from cover letter to make it more professional and attractive to the recruiters. On the contrary, the bad thing about cover writing is that there are several recruiters who do not provide importance on a cover letter, so it becomes difficult to access the nature of recruiters in terms of delivering the appropriate cover letter.

Abstract Conceptualisation: Reflecting on my understanding of the cover letter, I believe that it is an important employability skill that needs to be presented among individuals searching for good jobs. According to Tomaska and Nosek (2018), it had been observed that the authors are also of the view that cover letters should be accompanied alongside CV in order to increase the chances of getting selected in the interview. I also feel that cover letter would benefit in sharing my knowledge and experience in details with the recruiter as well as eagerness towards helping the organisation to achieve its business goals and objectives.

Active Experimentation: The learning which I have gained from the course is certainly going to help me in placing myself in the desired job. Initially, I did not care about the cover letter but now I would be applying my knowledge to prepare myself an appropriate cover letter to generate positive first image towards my recruiting company.

Reflective writing

For practice and review on the reflective writing, Gibbs's reflective model has been applied here:

Description: Before the class on the topic of reflective writing, I had been unaware of the concept of reflection. I was initially quite interested and liked the class as it discussed the looking back at past experience, analysing the event and thinking carefully on the event. I initially understood the topic in which the tutor was discussing the multiple perspectives of reflective writing such as personal aspirations, work-based issues, academic theory and application to modules and learning. However, there was no scope for practical demonstration and therefore, I did not like the class as it proceeded with the theories of reflection such as Kolb's reflective model, Driscoll model and Gibb's reflective model. The lecture on the topic of reflective writing was useful as it helped me to attain the learning outcomes of the current assignment and task. While engaging in the individual task on a short reflection, I tried to apply Gibb's model and found difficulty in analysing the event.

Feelings: During the class, the reflective writing topic was quite interesting for me initially but with the progress into the models I felt that I am getting confused as to what is required from the reflection. I felt that I needed to focus more on the module topic and also conduct some additional research and seek for sample reflection for a better understanding.

Evaluation: The good thing about the experience was that I was able to ask questions to the tutor so clarify the doubts but the bad thing was that there was no practical demonstration of the reflection and reflective practice. The individual task was quite effective as the short reflection that I had written was checked by my tutor who provided me with some tips to improve my reflective writing.

Analysis: From the course topic, I was able to learn about the importance of reflection in self-assessment as I believed by reflecting on the past incidents would provide me with an impetus to identify my strengths and weaknesses. According to Bennett et al. (2016), reflection is considered to be an integral part of the learning process as it allows the learner to develop thoughts and ideas about oneself and keep improving the skills and capabilities. I have learned about the importance of reflection like my peers who had also written short reflection as a part of the individual tasks. However, I found that I am experiencing difficulty in analysing the events.

Conclusion: The learning experience from the course topic has been significant in understanding the role of reflection in the learning journey. I have realised that in the professional front, to improve my professional skills, I need to conduct a reflection of my past activities and formulate a development plan.

Action Plan: Since I am finding difficulty in assessing and analysing events under reflective writing, I need to develop my analytical skills. This could be done by enrolling into an analytical skills development course for six months.

Conclusion

Thus, it can be stated that the course on employability has been able to cover all major skills and competencies required to acquire good jobs in the competitive market. The study has been carried out through the help of reflective models to analyse learning and understanding of topics related to CV writing, employability skills, reflective writing and cover letter writing.

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