

Academic and
employability skills
BMSW4001_LON

Academic report

Module reflection

Kalina Matharoo
Student ID: 2125136

Contents

Introduction.....	2
Gibb`s reflective cycle	2
Time management.....	2
CV writing	3
Cover letter writing	4
Public speaking and giving presentation.....	4
Conclusion	6
Reference List	7

Introduction

Reflective practice assists expanding self- awareness, representing the core component of emotional intelligence (Bassot, 2015). It helps forming a better understanding of others and stimulates the personal's growth. According to Confucius, the reflection, the imitation, and the experience, are the three methods through which, one might learn wisdom (Hinett, 2002). The reflective practice enables ones to learn about themselves, their work, their studies, and the way they correlate those topics with their personal growth and improvement (Bolton and Delderfield, 2018).

The purpose of this academic report is to reflect on my learning in the module `Academic and employability skills`, analysing the topics of time management, CV and cover letter writing and public speaking and giving presentations, through Gibb's reflective cycle.

Gibb's reflective cycle

In 1988 Graham Gibbs developed the Gibb's Reflective cycle, providing structure to learning from experiences, by offering a 6- stage framework allowing the practitioner to learn and plan based on it. It is a useful instrument in reflecting upon repetitive or stand-alone experiences (Gibbs, 1988). The first stage- description narrates the situation in detail. The stage- feelings explores the feelings and the thoughts that occurred during the experience, and their impact. The stage- evaluation evaluates what worked and what did not in the situation. The stage- analysis determinates and extracts meaning from the situation. The stage- conclusion offers conclusions about what happened and highlights what changes would contribute to improving the outcome in the future. The final stage- action plan offers a plan of what would be done in a different way in a similar or related situation in the future. (Ghaye, 2010).

The reason why I chose the Gibb's reflective cycle for this report, is because it would help me best to learn in- depth from the sessions in `Academic and Employability skills`, and develop my skills in time management, CV and cover letter writing and delivering presentations.

Time management

According to Carla Crutsinger (1994), time management could be defined as a process of 6 components: placing goals, prioritising, deciding how much time to dedicate to each of them, adjusting based on the unpredictability, revisiting them regularly and observing results. Before the session, if one would ask me to define time management, I would say it was a skill that we all had it naturally. However, I was now made to realise that it was not something we had naturally, but rather an ability I now aspired to master.

The new knowledge made me feel both intrigued and overwhelmed, as I did not know where to begin from. Researching, I came Dirk Zeller (2012), who suggested that for one to master the skill of time management, one would have to get to know oneself. Further, he suggested giving an honest answer to questions such as: how many hours a day one can work at high level, what is one's most productive time of the day, how many weeks one can work at high intensity without a break etc. in order to identify one's rhythm to 'get in the zone'. He also suggested naming the goals how one could be given a clear direction, and group them in 5 different categories such as career, family, health, money/ financial, personal, and spiritual with total number of 50 goals. According to another article published by Educational Appstore (2021), becoming more efficient could be obtained through the usage of apps such as: 'focus booster', 'remember the milk', '30/30', 'rescue time' etc which would assist individuals in realising how they spend their time, and then build their goals list by priorities. Further, they help remaining focused and learn techniques which would help accomplishing goals within the desired time frames. Being eager to get better at my personal time management, I followed all the advice I came across, creating lists, spreadsheets, downloading all the suggested apps etc. However, within few days I realised that rather than becoming more efficient, I started procrastinating, spending lot of time 'organising'. Not all techniques worked for me, and my mistake was jumping into forcing myself following all of them at once rather than selecting first. I learned that based on my studies being completely internet- related, I easily get distracted and spend hours procreating. To prevent that, I started using the Google's extension 'WasteNoTime' which denied me access to my social medias, shopping sites, and YouTube in the time from 7 am until 2 pm when I am most productive. I learned that while all those apps were helpful and revolutionary, they were not for me. Instead, I prefer using a notebook and writing down my goals. In reflection, I learned how to be more time- efficient as a student and working professional, too.

CV writing

Ever since I was 18 and legally rightful to work, I understood the need of creating a good CV. In Bulgaria, where I came from, and continental Europe, the most successful CV is meant to be the one adapted by the Europass CV builder. I moved to the UK still offering the same CV format, never doubting its acceptance in the UK. During the lecture of CV writing, we learned that the CV is a short-written summary of one's education, qualifications, skills, and working experience and should be constantly edited and adapted, changing the key words in concordance to the job that one applies for. This has been the first thing I realised I had never done before, as I would only occasionally edit my CV (if I would gain a new qualification, start a new job etc). Researching the matter, I came across the concept of applicant tracking system (ATS). According to Prospects (2021), nearly each CV before being read by a human, gets read by a machine- ATS. Further, it suggested that a CV should reach a success rate of 80% by ATS before it eventually gets reviewed by the recruiter. I decided to upload my CV at one of them- CV360, which received a rate of 27%. I was provided with a feedback of how I could improve it, but reached only 64% success. According to Jobs (2019) a standard CV should not be longer than 2 A4 sides, which mine was. It also advised an inclusion of a profile, which would provide the reader with a statement highlighting the key attributes that would make me stand out. It also spoke about the format, providing with advice such as naming the document only by the

personal name, avoiding using sans-serif fonts, using bullet points, using active verbs, avoiding over-used phrases such as 'team player' etc. After I followed all the given advice, and redid again and again my initial CV, it finally scored 85%. To put in test, I sent it to a company I have ambition working for but never managed to get a call from. This has been the first time I received a reply from them, which proved that the learned techniques and the done adjustments were beneficial. I was beyond happy to receive their email, and very pleased with all the things I learned during the lecture which helped me get a call from the company I aspire to work for. In reflection, learning how to re-do my CV have been life's beneficial.

Cover letter writing

According to Beatty (2004), a cover letter is presumably the most important letter one would ever write, representing a key document introducing oneself to the prospective employer which would then dictate the success of an interview's invitation. I had always hate this part of the job application process, as I never knew how to open the letter, and how to structure it. The lecture taught me how to do so. It was especially helpful that we were given a writing task, which pushed my thinking into the right direction. According to Amber Rolfe (2018) the crucial part of writing a successful cover letter was conducting research about the company, the industry, the competitors, the target audience, the role involvement, the essential skills and trying to get in touch with already existing employees hired at the same job role. She explains that only once the research is done, one would have the key information and words needed for a successful cover letter to be written. National career services (2022) suggest using 4 paragraphs, which would first address the reason for writing, second provide information of why one is a suitable candidate, then how the candidate could contribute to the company, and finally closing the letter. Further it advised not being overly personal, not making it all about one and one's skills, not drawing attention to one's weaknesses and learning the fine line between being enthusiastic and being desperate. After I implemented the adjustments, along with my powered CV, I managed to get a call back from a business I had tried to reach unsuccessfully. All the adjustments helped me land an interview's invitation. In the future, I would always write a new cover letter, depending on the company I would apply for and make sure to follow each of the learned steps.

Public speaking and giving presentation

I am a very confident person, until I must speak publicly in front of an audience. When I learned that we were supposed to deliver a presentation in week 9, I felt so scared, questioning my abilities. During the lectures, we were provided with useful tips, of how to deliver a presentation. However, even the provided guidance, my delivery was awful. The whole experience was a big push out of my comfort zone and resulted with me not presenting the best I could have, making me fake my confidence. Being disappointed in myself, triggered me improving this skill, and understanding what caused my anxiety of public speaking. I watched couple of Ted Talks, and the most impressive ones were by Danish Dhamini (2017), Animesh Gupta (2015) and Sin Kosal (2018)- all of them helping me understand that my anxiety and

fear were product of my phobia of forgetting the important information and the lack of motivation as it was not a `life or a death situation` (as I could still pass the module even if I did not do excellent job with the first task, I did not feel the necessary pressure to do better). Once I came to those realisations, I started calling on other sources too. According to an article published by a University of Oxford (2016) the success of public speaking and presentation delivery, lays in a good preparation. Besides preparing the visual presentation, one requires to be prepared oneself by creating a clear plan of the structure of the presentation, getting to know the audience, their background, expertise and practicing the presentation numerous times in front of family members, close friends or simply recording it and rewatching it later. I realised this has been another reason affecting my confidence with the delivery in week 9. Rather than starting by preparing a plan of what I was going to speak, I started by creating the presentation first which made me feel so anxious and not knowledgeable enough. I also never practiced presenting it. Learning this, I tried to redo the whole task 1 again, and present in front of my friends. Before the official presentation, I recorded myself. The video helped me release the areas I needed to improve at, such as the pronunciation of certain words, maintaining eye contact, improving my voice diction etc. which helped my confident. In reflection, I am glad I had to do task 1, and face with my fear of public speaking at this stage, how I would not build any barriers in the future.

Conclusion

During the module's delivery, I was helped gaining transferable skills in: time management, CV and cover letter writing, public speaking, and presentation delivery. Through exercises and research, I was stimulated to improve them. At first, I tried adopting all the advice, feeling overwhelmed. However, soon after I realised that not everything was beneficial for myself. I realised that what essentially worked for others, just distracted me, so I started analysing and selecting. I concluded that each of those skills, could be worked on, and I became already better at. In reflection, the module helped me gain skills and enriched me with techniques that would continually contribute to my personal development, but also my success as a student.

Reference List

1. Bassot, B. (2015) *The reflective practice guide*. Milton Park: Taylor and Francis.
2. Beatty, R. (2004) *The Perfect Cover Letter*. 3rd edn. Hoboken: Wiley.
3. Bolton, G. and Delderfield, R. (2018) *Reflective practice*. 5th edn. California: Sage publications.
4. Crutsinger, C. (1994) *Thinking smarter: Skills for academic skills*. USA: Skylight Professional development.
5. Dhamani, D. (2017) *How I overcame my fear of public speaking*. Danish Dhamani. TEDxKids@SMU. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80UVjkcxCmA> (accessed: 30 March 2022).
6. Educational Appstore (2021) *Best time management apps for students*. Available at: <https://www.educationalappstore.com/blog/best-apps-will-help-students-manage-time/> (Accessed: 17 March 2022).
7. Ghaye, T. (2010) *Teaching and Learning through Reflective Practice*. 2nd edn. Milton Park: Taylor and Francis.
8. Gibbs, G. (1988) *Learning by doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods*. Oxford: Oxford Polytechnic.
9. Gupta, A. (2015) *A dialogue to kill the fear of public speaking*. Animesh Gupta. TEDxNITCalicut. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cjs7dyzLVco> (Accessed: 30 March 2022).
10. Hinett, K. (2002) *Developing practice in legal education*. Coventry: UK Centre for legal education- University of Warwick.
11. Jobs (2019) *How to write a good CV?* Available at: <https://career-advice.jobs.ac.uk/academic/how-to-write-a-good-cv/> (Accessed: 20 March 2022).
12. Kosal, S. (2018) *3 Powerful tips to speak better on stage or off stage*. Sin Kosal. TEDxAbdulCarimeSt. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BH45PSe_9ok (Accessed: 30 March 2022).
13. National Career Service (2022) *How to write a cover letter*. Available at: <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice/covering-letter> (Accessed: 28 March 2022).
14. Prospects (2021) *How to write a CV*. Available at: <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/cvs-and-cover-letters/how-to-write-a-cv> (Accessed: 20 March 2022).
15. Rolfe, A. (2018) *How to: Write a cover letter*. Available at: <https://www.reed.co.uk/career-advice/how-to-write-a-cover-letter/> (Accessed: 28 March 2022).
16. University of Oxford (2016) *Public speaking: top tips to deliver a presentation with impact*. Available at: https://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/media_wysiwyg/Public%20Speaking%20master%20class%20slides%20%2831.10.2016%29.pdf (Accessed: 1 April 2022).
17. Zeller, D. (2012) *Effective Time Management in a Day for Dummies*. Hoboken: Wiley.