

My Personal & Professional Development Plan

ACADEMIC & EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS REPORT

BMSW4001 (Task 2)

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Introduction:

The purpose of this task is to reflect on my learning, and I will be using Gibb's recognised model of reflection throughout the report.

Therefore, I will analyse published literature and use feedback given in class, while reflecting on the 3 topics required for this second task of the term.

I will reflect from a personal perspective, on how useful, the topics have been on my learning experience while taking into consideration what I already knew. With contents provided by the teachers and the University, the overall development of my skill set was tackled within class and as well as outside the learning environment.

Description:

As a student of the 2020 Academic and Employability Skills module (ACE), of the University of Wales Trinity St. David (UWTSD), I have been requested to appropriately submit a written and structured reflective report.

Like stated in the introduction, the objective of this reflective report is to make me reflect in an overall manner about the subjects learned in this first term, through this new online platform of education (Moodle). The module of Academic & Employability Skills is a crucial aspect of my foundation year, and for the years ahead of me.

The best way possible to describe Gibbs reflective module is that a lot of people find that they acquire knowledge from experience. However, if they don't learn from their past, and they don't think critically about how they might achieve better and be better, it could be hard for them to learn anything at all.

This is where the sequence is really useful. You can use it to help people make sense of problems so that they can appreciate what they have done well and what they can do better in the future. (MindTools, 2009)

My selected three topics were, Time Management, Note Taking, and CV, since I have already started the research on my previous task.

SWOT analysis was essential for me to evaluate my current situation. As the acronym suggest “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, are organizational influences known collectively as “SWOTs.” (Leigh, 2010 pp.115) This helped me implementing my new skills in to practice, review my mistakes and try to learn from them. Which soon made me realise that I cannot rely my own opinion barely only in relation to just a specific situation. I need to take my time to gather more information in order to have a solid and further

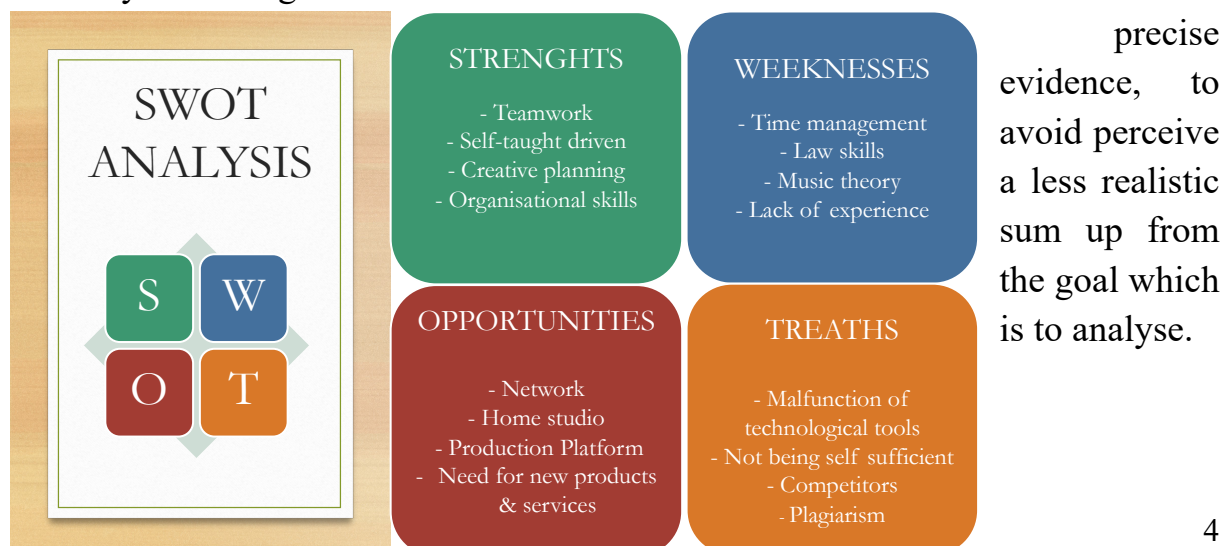


Figure 1 - Own representation of SWOT Analysis

Feelings:

Since the start of course I have been on a “roller coaster” of self-doubt – even more due to the fact that, unfortunately, the course is online. This particular factor gave me this feeling of having less support; especially since I have not been in a classroom for a few years. The online learning environment has required me to learn more, and quicker – which to be quite fair, with a part-time job and other responsibilities (probably like my colleagues) it has not been easy; but it made me more proactive, self-driven and self-taught.

This particular task felt really challenging. I had to rethink and switch my approach to my work method, given the amount of research and content required. But fortunately for me and my colleagues, the content given in the classes is available in the Moodle as an aid. So, I hope that this task proves that – considering that it was well understood and well applied – it has improved my workflow for better results, than the previous tasks.

Evaluation:

Evaluating the overall learning experience, has been very positive. I learned: how to create a personal & professional development plan; time management; paraphrasing, summarising; as well as properly create a good presentation, therefore, improving my public speaking skills.

Although all the subjects of the module may look very basic, it can be challenging – even more if you are someone like me that hasn't finish the studies, and never worked in an office – to deal with Word, PowerPoint, Excel, etc. Through all these different skills, I have realised that nothing is basic. Aristotle famously said that the more you know, the more you realise you that don't know much.

Therefore, like everything that we focus on, learning is as challenging as it is rewarding. In Portugal there is a popular saying: “O saber não ocupa lugar”, which we could translate as “there is no such thing as too much knowledge”.

The positive side of task one was that it allowed me to use my creative side which I love, and it left me comfortable and engaged enough to commit to something that I usually do not like that much, like studying in this particular case. I often find myself easily bored when studying, derived of my lack of motivation on the subjects approached, since I am more of a practical then theoretical person. For that reason, I am very grateful for all these opportunities to improve as a Human being, student and future professional.

Despite that fact, I must work even harder to reach a reasonable standard of understanding of the English language, regarding reading comprehension and writing. I thought I knew the basics of the language but not academically wise – I had to check my ego as we all should do when facing a new challenge.

Nevertheless, I have learned that using my strengths can be more efficient than focusing on my weaknesses. Moreover, planning how I want my work to go, before I start, as proven to be very effective. Lastly, I will remember the dangers of bad time management and like the theory of the Pareto Principle (Dunford *et al.*, 2014) suggests, start looking out primarily for the twenty percent (20%) that is going to accomplish the other eighty percent (80%).

Analysis:

Time Management

The most common time management definition used is Lakein (1973): “the process of determining needs, setting goals to achieve these needs, prioritising and planning tasks required to achieve these goals” (Claessen, 2007, pp262) I already knew that time management was essential to any student, but I never had to apply it like I have been doing during this module.

As previously explained learning about the Pareto Principle (80:20 rule) has helped me to minimise and eliminate time waste on the tasks assigned; allocate efforts efficiently in order to maximize productivity; focus on the bigger and harder tasks first; and set exact steps and frequent breaks.

This wasn't easy to do at first, because I am used to working for someone else – meaning that they manage my breaks, my working hours, my tasks, etc. However, studying more about the topic made me realise that it is essential for any student to properly manage their time in order to be successful.

Notetaking

Kiewra (1989) affirms that notetaking an extremely effective way to comprehend and recall the subjects in the classroom environment. Therefore, it serves two main purposes: “an encoding function suggesting that the process of recording notes is beneficial, and a storage function suggesting that the review of notes is helpful.” (ibid,pp.147)

I agree entirely with this author, because this is exactly what I use notetaking for: actively listening the materials approached; make connections between topics; and it is a quality review material.

As English is not my main language notetaking also proved to be another challenge. I started by taking notes in Portuguese; however, I realised that this wasn't very effective because beside having to constantly translate the notes, it wasn't stimulating my writing skills. I learned with my mistake, and next term I will only take effective notes in English.

CV

A CV is “a comprehensive document that lists your qualifications for employment. It's primarily used for academic positions.” (Mckay, 2020) It is crucial because it is the first screening method in the hiring process. (Welch, 1986)

Since I have been in the job market from a young age, the importance of the CV was not new to me. However, this report and this module made me investigate further into the key components of a good CV.

A good CV shows the years of experience in detail, it provides a better overall view of expertise, and it makes employees stand out in the job market selection. Therefore it is essential that a CV contains: “personal details, tertiary education record, work experience, career objective” (Welch, 1986, pp.18)

Conclusion:

To conclude, I have learned that I should not “leave everything to the last minute”, as well as let external issues affect my works as a student.

However, I firmly believe that if it wasn't for the current world pandemic the University would not be close for schooling and my studies would be presential. Just that alone would reflect my commitment to finish this module being an exemplar pupil, mounting up my grades.

Nevertheless, I cannot blame no one else but me, for the lack of basic skills in such an evolved world. For this reason, I must apply myself more on the theory part of school, with the main focus on these particular skills: Organising studies, reflective writing and academic writing.

In a few years' time I deeply hope, we are all able to say to our grandsons and daughters that even though, the whole world was “collapsing”, I were able to driblet all the deadlines, tasks, objectives and still be successful.

Do I need to practice what I have learn this term and relearn some of these basic skills? Yes! In my humble opinion, don't we all? Some of us more than others, but we all do so as everyone else, that here no shame on it, because we live and we learn so if we not happy with our current situation, personally so much as professionally we should fight for it.

Action Plan:

I cannot start my action plan by saying the typical phrase “if I had the opportunity to do it again I would do it differently”, since at that moment I had not acquired the current knowledge. For this reason, also reflecting on my past actions, I am demanding myself to learn from it.

To that end, I can say that my action plan for the second term, will definitely be based beforehand; and focused on time management skills. Consequently, I will have to exercise my academic writing on the phase of gathering pertinent information with all that it entails: finding, evaluating and incorporating sources; notetaking; referencing; paraphrasing; summarising; presentation and report structure; and reflective writing.

“The accelerated analysis by Eisenhower's principle is auxiliary in cases when it is necessary to make urgently the decision on priority of performance of tasks. Priorities are established by such criteria as urgency and importance of a task” (Kirillov et al., 2015 pp.196).

Nonetheless, time wise, I will have three times as much content, prepared and available ready to work towards the conclusion of my tasks, way prior to the delivery date, timely efficient and also stress free.

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