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Academic And Employability Skills
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TIME MANAGEMENT

Leaving my homeland of Moldova, keeping up with time was a big issue I had hoped to change at University. The constant barrage of reminders from my grandparents loomed large over me. Upon resumption of this course, it came as good surprise techniques that could help me improve on my ability to manage time. I set myself two initial goals. The first was to wake up at seven am daily to take a walk and reflect on my previous day and my plans for the day. I also set myself a target of approaching school work in divided chunks in order to easier assimilate my learning. ADHD deeply affects my concentration so these were as I thought, a good starting point. In order to help better plan, I applied the Gibbs model of reflection (Gibbs, 1998). This model of reflection was developed by Graham Gibbs based upon each stage of David A. Kolb's experiential cycle (Kolb, 1984). He suggested how a full structured analysis of a situation could take place using prompt questions at each stage.

The first stage is the initial experience or description. My initial sojourn into the world of responsible time keeping was waking up daily at seven am prompt. This felt almost torturous. Waking up in the morning was a very difficult task as I had to readjust my sleeping hours, and time. The first few days included breaking my own laid out rules as I realized my friendships, relationships in general had to readjust as well to make space for the new me. After a week of ensuring I slept and ate dinner on time, I noticed a big difference in my desire to wake up from the previous weeks. My relationships with classmates, friends, etc, initially took a back seat as I was not sure on how to implement my plans. A lot of friends complained but the progress I saw in my happiness and mood made me realize it was all worth it. Time keeping really helped open a window into my diet, sleeping patterns and relationships. It made me realize that staying up late without any fruitful reasons, or eating late all take away from me as a person and becoming more assertive with my time, I could better serve my immediate circle. Progress towards my learnings did not pan out as much I would have liked, I focused a lot on keeping to time in one regard that I almost forgot about my other goal. To this end, I have created a daily diary which helps schedule my day into manageable events throughout, with room given for indiscretions. So far it has been going well.

ACADEMIC WRITING

Upon arriving into the United Kingdom, my understanding, and control of the English language was basic at best. My grasp of the 'magic words' please, thank you and sorry were entirely limited. Within two months of my stay, I started making friends with more native English speakers and in little time, my command of the English language had improved to a point where I could have effective conversations with strangers. This however had not translated over to my spelling and writing. As a university student, this would be my primary means of communication towards my goal of graduation. Something had to be done. I approached an older friend who came to the United Kingdom in similar circumstances and asked for help on improving my English writing to better my academics. He suggested that I begin reading English books with an online dictionary and translator. I began to do this and saw an immediate improvement. However the advice which really helped propel me forward was the advice to watch tv shows in English with the translation on. The real life situational use of English words would help me learn the use and practicality of certain words. It worked like a charm and within weeks, my writing in English had improved.

The main takeaway from this experience was that consistency is important. Constantly training myself via books, conversations and tv shows would help improve my grasp of the English language. Falling back into my community while a positive thing, was a negative drag on my control of English. Diversity of friends has encouraged me to be bolder in my speech and drastically improved my ability to write English to a satisfactory level. The main model of reflection I applied was Terry Borton's (1970) Driscoll by Borton. 'What?', 'So What' and 'Now What'. These were developed by John Driscoll in 1994, 2000, and 2007. Driscoll matched the three questions to the stages of an experiential learning cycle called the Driscoll cycle and added trigger questions that can be used to complete the cycle. 'What?' is the event, this describes the situation. I pointed out my concern. 'So What?' within weeks of attempting the various methods advised, I began to see an improvement in my conversations and an improvement in the quality of my essays. 'Now what?' My control of English has markedly improved, I have added complex words to my vocabulary. I have now learnt structure within a plan is very vital in ensuring we all reach our potential.

USING THE LIBRARY AND GATHERING INFORMATION

Academic resources such as the library or online have not been tools I have often used in my academic research. ADHD is a debilitating disorder which affects almost every situation

in my life. My academics were no different. Learning how to actively use these resources all came down to my understanding of the English language. The pandemic greatly affected how much I could physically attend campus however, the online resources were an augment to the other resources I was using to gain better control of English. I attended campus once and majority of my learnings happened online. With the able assistance of classmates, I used resources which helped me understand knowledge is power. My reflection is whittled down and is rather incomplete as I never truly had a bonafide campus experience and have had to rely entirely on online resources. A model of reflection in which I have studied is called the John's model. Christopher Johns designed his model for structured reflection (Johns 2006) through analysing the dialogue between practitioners and their supervisors who worked with them throughout the learning experience. Johns used Barbara Carper's patterns of knowing in his model (Carper 1978) which includes the following: aesthetics (the art of what we do), personal (self-awareness), ethics (moral knowledge), empirics (scientific knowledge). John's model also adds: reflexivity (how does it connect to previous experiences). It is more or less an organisational model, it examines situations in context of the environment. Helps provide prompt questions that are easy to follow, which is helpful in both individual and group situations. Although it lacks rigidity, the structure and flow can be very helpful to an experienced user of this model, while being complex for a new user. A question or prompt is given (reflective cue). A response is recorded using Carper's knowledge pattern.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

When I arrived on campus for the very first day, a teacher told me 'more information, more power'. Those words have remained with me till today. My time learning in the United kingdom can be summed up quite rightly that way, more knowledge, more power. I have been lucky to have been blessed good teachers in my nine to ten weeks thus far. I have had a good experience. I have been informed on where I need improvements and how to work with others. The resources I have been suggested have helped me steer my knowledge on the context behind my studies. I have applied different models to reflect on my learning so far. Gibbs' has been the predominant means of reflection. My biggest topic to improve on was my English language control. Understanding the complexity would drastically improve my employability but also the quality of my learning. I have evaluated that I need to keep on

reading and associating with more native English speakers and as a result should see more improvements on my control and use of the English language.

REFERENCES

University of Nottingham (2019), *Models or framework of reflection*. Available at: [Models of Reflection \(nottingham.ac.uk\)](https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/reflectivelearning/) (Accessed 1 May, 2022)