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Reflective Report: Academic and Employability skills Overview

**Academic and Employability skills
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Introduction

To develop as an individual it is necessary to keep learning and over the past few months I have attained new bounds of knowledge. During the period of this course, we have done more than a handful of topics with their various tasks and assignments and regarding the assignment I have narrowed the long list of topics down to the these four. The four topics I have chosen are the ones that are very closely related to my current career path, the ones that were more difficult for me at the start and the ones in which I have a deep rooted understanding, practical experience and the additional vast knowledge acquired from the teachings.

Reflection model

I decided to use the Gibbs Reflective model (1988) due to its ability to allow learning in an iterative manner and over the years iterative has been my go-to in the process of learning. The Gibbs reflective model involves these six steps;

- *Description : What happened? No judgements or conclusions, simply describe.*
- *Feelings : What were your reactions and feelings? Again no analysing.*
- *Evaluation : What was good and bad about the experience? Make valid judgements.*
- *Analysis : What sense can you make of the situation? Bring outside experience to help you*
- *Conclusions (general) : What could be concluded, in a general sense, from these experiences?*
- *Conclusions (specific) : What could be concluded about your own specific, unique was of working?*
- *Personal action plans : What are you going to do differently in this type of situation next time?*

(Gibbs, 1988)

Please see Appendix for more information on Gibbs.

1. Time management

The first of the four topics is the topic Time management / Organising study.

I presupposed that the most effective method of time management was multitasking and with definitions like time management is the *practice of using time that you have available in a useful and effective way, especially in your work* (Cambridge dictionary, n.d), I had no reason to doubt my assumption. In the first week, we did time management and I was introduced to new concepts which I did not entirely understand. I began applying my understood concept of time management to learn it quickly but I failed due to my false presupposition. I began research into time management to find the problem with my theory and I finally did. As I started developing anxiety and stress with my constant multitasking, I began to doubt my presupposition as I was unable to perform even the most basic tasks. In a bid to figure it out my issues I implemented the (Dunn and Dunn, 1992; 1993; 1999) learning model which defines learning style as *the way in which each learner begins to concentrate on, process, absorb, and retain new and difficult information*. At first I was overwhelmed with the new information but putting myself in the right places emotionally, sociologically, environmentally, psychologically, and physiologically the experience led me to reading up more on time management and gaining a better understanding of what it is and what it entails. During my reading I discovered a new phrase that offset my first presupposition said by (Ferriss, 2009) which says *few words on time management: forget about all about it. In the strictest sense, you shouldn't be trying to do more in each day* which then opened my mind to the new concepts we were being taught. Despite my original inability after reading and doing a bit more research I was able to absorb the information taught to us and I gained new knowledge regarding time management and learning in general. *Time management is life management* (Singh, 2008). This is concept i came across which also offset my original presupposition because, multitasking is not efficient life management wise. Thinking back now the better approach would have been researching on time management and its ideas before implementing it and if the situation were to arise again that approach would be most favourable.

2. CV writing

The second of the four topics is the topic CV writing.

A CV is a document aimed at convincing an employer that who you are, your qualifications, work experience and your skills makes it worthwhile for them to offer you either work experience or a chance to move forward in a formal selection process (Morgan, 1997 : 339). This definition was given to us as we began and it aided and solidified my previous self taught definition of what a CV was. With the mentality that I understood I was baffled when my own incompetence was brought to light as I was unable to write a proper CV that held up the standard taught to us. I was unable to write as I was swamped with new information causing me to be unable follow one of the rules of CV writing which was to summarise. I began to scrimp reading countless blogs, websites, published work while the quote *the ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy (MLK, Jr. , 1963)* replayed in my head constantly reminding me that I had a serious challenge. As in the note given to us *“personal statement: brief ... clear and concise” (UWTSD, 2020)* or in published writing as in (Mcgee, 2009, 216) *“Profile. A summary of your main skills and attributes”* it was clear I had lost an important skill but it set me on track to gain more knowledge regarding cv writing. As I continued scrambling I decided to implement the method taught to us in class which says *using the headlines below make lists that are relevant to you:*

- *KNOWLEDGE*
- *SKILLS*
- *ATTRIBUTES*
- *OTHER THINGS* (UWTSD, 2020).

Then I utilised the context of informational summary and was finally able to write a CV that followed the given prescriptions. Ultimately, I realised there were better approaches I could have taken and losing my head when I was unable to construct a CV was a huge let down. If the situation every arose again I would first retain my cool, begin research then move on the writing aspect.

3. Analytical and critical thinking

The third of the four topics is the topic Analytical and Critical thinking skills.

I have always considered myself to be a good analytical and critical thinker, it is part of the reason I decided to go into business for myself. As a young man my parents would always say listen to your elders, they have more experience and they are better at problem solving. I would listen out of respect but deep down I would consider the absurdity of their hypothesis, the whys and

hows on which their hypothesis stood and the origin of the hypothesis. So, when we began this topic in class I decided to test if my opposition to the hypothesis was right. The thought even though exciting, it was scary to think there was a chance I could be wrong. But, I would rather be wrong than to not have questioned it and understood in my own way. I worried I would not be able to find material to support my theory but I was learning so it was a win-win. In class we were told *critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skilfully conceptualising, applying, analysing, synthesising, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.* (UWTSD, 2020) and *Analytical thinking is the mental process of breaking down complex information or comprehensive data into smaller parts* (UWTSD, 2020). But, just these definitions alone did not help prove my point so I began research. During my research I came across various definitions including, *analytical thinking is the ability to scrutinise and break down facts and thoughts into their strength and weaknesses* (Amer, 2005) and *critical thinking / reflective thinking is active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends* (Dewey 1910: 6; 1933: 9). These definitions aided my views in the sense that I began thinking “in our current ever changing and developing environment, does experience with history prove prowess in thinking ability?” but as I tussled with that question the popular quote *those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it* (Santayana, 1905) reprised in my head as a contradiction to my theory that age doesn’t matter. As I resumed my search I found my hold grail which was a study in which The Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal Test was administered to a group of 484 subjects ranging in age from 12 to 80 years and representing diverse educational, occupational, and economic backgrounds and it was confirmed that *critical thinking ability, as measured by this test, shows a progressive increase from late childhood through to the mid-twenties, holds up to 35 years and then declines progressively through to the seventies* (Friend, 1958) which proved my theory to some aspect. In conclusion I was able to gain a greater understanding of analytical and critical thinking skills and I was able to prove my theory to some aspect. Subject to this reoccurring, I would begin with researching papers relating to my thesis in lieu of diving straight into random research. I would talk to lecturers and then write my report.

4. Cover letter writing

The fourth of the four topics is the topic Cover letter writing.

Considering I have worked my fair share of jobs, I am ashamed to say I barely knew what a cover letter was. Other than the occasional hearing or seeing I had no other notion regarding cover letters. We were told most importantly *Do not give employers everything but give them enough about your Knowledge, Skills, Abilities and Other things (KSAOs) to make them interested.* (UWTSD, 2020) So, we were to find a grey area between professional and person and keep in it. We were then given a template and were told to construct a cover letter of our own but my lack of proper knowledge left me unable to write a cover letter up to par. The process began with me panicking and basking in my own disappointment before I decided to settle down, get a pen and jot down everything from the things I knew to the things I wished I knew so I could figure out where the problem was and begin preparations to fix it. *A cover letter is written as an introduction for your resume (Letter, n.d)* and *A covering letter is a professional business letter which provides an employer with an introduction to an accompanying CV. (Morgan, 2017: 339)* These are the definitions I started with on my journey in writing my very own cover letter. Using the slides from class as a foundation, research from sites and a friend who works in a job agency as I began my process of learning. I began looking at websites, blogs and textbooks in hopes to find examples of what a proper cover letter is supposed to look like. After looking at various examples I began slowly writing even with the huge sense of incompetence welling within me. I already finished my cover letter and had a friend who works in a job agency look at it and give me feedback on what I need to correct or change. After receiving feedback I corrected it and had my very own cover letter. In the end, thinking back to where I started I realised having a conversation with a teacher would have made my learning process easier so I would seek help before I begin my essay thenceforth.

Conclusion

Where I am from the young is supposed to learn from the old so pushing all my pride to the side was somewhat of a difficult task, could even be considered as impossible for some. Initially as the course began, disregarding what I knew and filling myself with new information almost seemed impossible but as the days went by I slowly became accustomed to it and it gave access to a whole new world of knowledge and a new outlook on things. I have gained not only new school for the workplace but a new perspective on things.

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 - Slide 8.
 - Slide 4.

APPENDIX

Gibbs reflective Model

When writing using Gibbs model possible questions to ask include

Description

- What happened?
- What was the outcome of the situation?

Feelings

- What were you feeling during the situation?
- What were you thinking during the situation?

Evaluation

- What was good and bad about the experience?

Analysis

- What sense can I make of the situation?
- What knowledge can help me understand the situation?

Conclusions

- What did I learn from this situation?

Personal action plan

- How could I have done differently?
- How do I develop for next time?