

Reflective account

I will be using the Gibbs reflective cycle to reflect upon the module “Changemakers: Building a Personal Brand for Sustainable Employment.” The Gibbs reflective cycle was developed by Graham Gibbs in 1988 with the aim it would help people to reflect on their experiences.

The first point on Gibbs reflective cycle is a description of what it is that you are reflecting on, this could be an activity or in this case the module that I have studied during my university course. In this case I am reflecting on one specific module. When I first heard the title for the module “Building a Personal Brand for Sustainable Employment” I did not know how this would fit into my course which is based around inclusive education. On reading the assignment specifications and course module handbook I could see that a large part of this module was based around selling yourself to a potential university or employer.

The second stage of the Gibbs reflective cycle is feelings, what are your feelings towards the activity or in this case the University module. Initially reading the course module handbook and the assignment brief I was confused as to how this would help me in my future career. Much of the course outline seems to be based around activities such as creating a CV or personal networking. As somebody who is already in employment and also in education, I did not initially see how this would benefit me moving forward in my career.

The next stage of the Gibbs cycle is an evaluation of what was good and bad about the experience. Despite my initial scepticism towards the module my overall outcome has been positive. I was initially under the impression that this module would not be benefiting me moving forward, however now since completion I can see that I have learnt skills that will benefit me moving forward in my career both in education and employment. I did find the module a challenge. This was the first module back in education this year, and if I am

completely honest, getting back into the education system after a long break was quite challenging. I was able to engage in all sessions that were available for the module and found many of the sessions, especially those with a guest speaker, to be very informative and interesting. The sessions for this module were both online and in-person, I personally found the online sessions quite difficult to engage with. I much prefer the sessions in person where you are able to interact with both my peers and the course lecturer in a more personal way thus giving more opportunity for sharing of ideas and opinions.

When I looked at the assignment overviews, I was under the impression these would be quite easy assignments to complete, due to the fact that I already had a CV and had completed personal statements previously for jobs and university. I did however find this more difficult than expected. When completing this assignment, I found it quite difficult to self-evaluate and to sell myself to potential university courses or to a new employer. This may be because the skills that I am marketing are things that I do on an almost daily basis, so to me it is an everyday occurrence, however when discussing this with my peers I came to realise that we all have different sets of skills which is what makes us all unique. It is these skills that a potential employer would be looking for. For example, I have good personal skills and that I am able to build relationships with both adults and the pupils in my care, but without me putting this into my curriculum vitae my potential employer or university would not be aware of the skills. Through the module I was able to understand the importance of being able to show your skills and unique talents in order to help you progress.

A particular highlight of the course for me was the guest speaker from the careers section of the University. They spoke with us about the importance of marketing yourself when writing personal statements or curriculum vitae. They also spoke about potential careers that I had

not considered previously and that how the skills that I have developed up to this point could be quite desirable to other employers outside of the education industry. An example of this would be the potential careers they showed us within the voluntary sector, this has been something I had never considered before however in completing this module I realise that the skills that I have gained could not only be beneficial to potential employers but also desirable. This was an interesting insight to me as I had always thought that my career would be in the Department of education however by looking at the other potential opportunities through the voluntary sector or other agencies, I can now see that maybe my skills would be suited to different jobs giving me a more diverse plan for my future.

The fourth stage of the Gibbs reflective cycle is analysis. This is where I reflect on what I have been able to take from the experience. On the whole I feel it has been a positive experience doing this module. It has shown me different avenues in which I can go used to go down once I finish my degree. It is also helped me develop skills I already had, for example I already had a CV prior to starting this module, however since completing the module I have been able to improve my CV by using the expertise of the career's guidance officer and the tips that I have learnt from completing the module itself.

I also now have a better understanding of the need for a professional network. This was not something I had considered in the past, who was in my network and how my network could be used in a positive way. From completing the module and researching it I now have a better understanding of how to use a professional network to benefit me in both education and my employment. My professional network would include staff that I currently work within the school, the sensory team from the local council who work with the pupils that I support, outside agencies that I work with, sign language teachers and mentors, and the other

communicators that I know working in various schools in the area. By knowing my professional network, I am now able to utilise it to help me be the best I can be. This is something I had never considered previously, and it is only through this module that I come to realise how important having a professional network is.

The fifth stage of the Gibbs reflective cycle is the conclusion. This is where I reflect on what I could have done differently if I were to do this again. One thing is clear and that is if I were to do this again, I would opt to have more lectures on campus where I could work cooperatively with my peers and my lecturer to share ideas. This really benefits me in my working and also helps me to develop a professional network of other like-minded students who work in similar professions to my own. This would also help alleviate the difficulties that I have with remote learning such as finding a quiet space away from family and other commitments in order to complete my work.

I also feel that if I were to do this module again, I would challenge myself further with my assignments. I do feel that I could have pushed myself out of my comfort zone when completing the module assignments. I opted to complete a curriculum vitae and personal statement for an application into postgraduate study as I felt when choosing my options that these would be the most relevant. Looking back, I now feel that I may have benefited from trying something different than what I had done previously for example to create a website for myself as this would challenge my computer processing skills and would be a new experience for me. I would also like to have delved deeper into professional networking or possibly a blog is again these are things I've not engaged in before.

I would also like to think that if I were to do this again, I would go in with a much more open mind and with less scepticism about how this would relate to my overall degree. I was concerned that as this is not directly linked to inclusive education this would not be relevant for me over the course that I'm currently studying however from completing the module and the assignments I can see that this is as relevant to me as any assignment that I have completed so far. This module is how we build skills that I will need in the future when applying for postgraduate study, professional development, or eventually when applying for jobs in whatever sector I choose to go into.

The final step of the Gibbs reflective cycle is an action plan of what you are going to do in the future based on the cycle. For this module I have learnt a lot more than I expected to and also realised that my education degree is not just an impact myself but also those I work with. The skills they were able to learn in this module will help my pupils, current and future, as I will be able to assist them in preparing for their future. I will be taking forward my note that for this module I did not challenge myself enough for the assignments to my next module to ensure that if this were the case again that I would push myself outside of my comfort zones because it is only then that I really challenging myself to do something different and therefore gaining new skills.

I would also not limit myself by not searching further than my goal career. Although it has been a goal of mine since a young age to have a career in the education system from doing this module, I can see that my skills could be used to benefit others in a variety of different roles, some in education and some in other sectors. I think that I would be doing a disservice to myself if I did not apply my skills because I would be limiting myself by my past career goals. This is something I also hope to be able to pass on to my students when they are looking at

their career futures, they should not limit themselves by their own goals, that they can achieve anything they put their minds to, and that they should try to explore different avenues.

This module has also helped me to explore what skills I need to develop for my own personal brand. Which skills are going to be important moving forward and how to best use the skills to market myself. A good example of this would be my use of British sign language and how it is currently a coveted skill in many career areas, developing the skill would benefit not just myself but also my current and future employers and would be a marketable skill for my own personal brand in the future. As I consider myself to be a good communicator and have good personal skills this is something else that I will be developing in the future as I feel that these are skills that are needed in a variety of different roles making it a marketable skill for many different employers whichever career avenue I decide to go down.

Overall, I am embarrassed to say that when I started the module, I was rather close minded however after finishing the module and the assignments I can see that my skills still need developing and this module has helped me to see where my skills need to be cultivated.

Reference list

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