

Employability Skills

Module: Professional Career

Development

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Part 1: Individual Reflection

Certificate of Higher Education

Starting studies is one of the most exciting yet stressful events in life. Waiting for ten minutes made me realize that I was responsible for both excitement and safety. I felt secure, equipped, and full of new opportunities, but I also questioned whether I would be able to meet the academic requirements and make new friends.

The first day at university was filled with emotions. I felt a slight tightening in my stomach. On one hand, I was excited to finally study the field that interested me, but on the other, I was anxious about adapting to this new environment. It began with an orientation session where we met our lecturers and other important university staff. Listening to them, I felt reassured as everyone seemed kind and helpful. During the first class, we started talking to each other. We shared our stress and challenges, realizing that we were all going through similar experiences. Between classes, we went for coffee together, laughing and exchanging first impressions. That was the moment I realized I was not alone in these emotions. That was how our first week of Career Development passed. According to research (Careersmart, 2024), career development is the process of directing educational experiences, including work-related activities, toward achieving career goals. It can also involve improving professional skills and competencies.

In the following classes, we focused on our mindset, particularly on how to develop a Growth Mindset. Beheshti (2022) emphasized that everyone has the potential to be a leader in all aspects of life. In times of mental stress and burnout, it is essential to connect with our "selves" through the heart. By taking a comprehensive approach and

integrating all aspects of our lives, we open the door to chance and success. Developing self-awareness and emotional intelligence is the key to making aligned decisions, with each choice leading to the next. Muhammad then conducted a personality test using the Honey & Mumford model, aimed at identifying and analysing students' learning styles. The diagnostic tool evaluates four styles: theoretical, active, pragmatic, and reflective. The theoretical framework is based on the didactic projects of Tamayo, Ortega, and Ruiz (2019), the Honey and Mumford model, and Madrigal (2015), which helps identify dominant learning styles. We also discussed "The Johari Window." Thomson (2021) explained how people often hide behind a façade, driven by imposter syndrome, to protect trust, relationships, or positions of authority. This concept is essential for strategic thinking, where replacing "yourself" with "team" and "others" with "competitors" encourages deeper insights and growth.

In the third week of classes, we discussed Holland's career theory. According to Randall, Patterson, Coyne, and Arnold (2020), Holland's theory connects a person's personality to their work environment, assuming both remain stable over time. The theory predicts that people will be more satisfied and productive in environments that match their personality. When there is a mismatch, it can lead to behavioural changes, where individuals either seek a better environment or adjust their behaviour and perceptions to achieve compatibility. Next, we discussed the Myers-Briggs personality type indicator, which classifies people into 16 different personalities based on how they perceive the world and make decisions. Owen (2020) discusses the common misconception that there is no "bad" category in the MBTI model, pointing out that facilitators often avoid conflict by promoting this idea. He highlights that each MBTI category has both positive and negative aspects and understanding both is important. While critics argue that MBTI lacks academic credibility, it is not intended to be a deep psychological tool. Instead, it helps identify different working styles and may prevent groupthink within teams. We then focused on Personal Plan Development. According to Stella (2021), personal planning is about taking action now to give yourself a chance to shape your future.

In the last class, we discussed Personal Branding, its pillars, and why it is so important. Dennison (2022) explains that branding is not just for companies; professionals also manage personal brands to achieve career success. A personal brand reflects your identity and represents a commitment to your audience. It is not only about your image but also your story, position in the industry, and the values and beliefs you convey. Additionally, we discussed Maslow's Motivation Theory. Jones and Hartzell (2023) explain in their video that motivation arises from a person's attempt to fulfil five basic needs: physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-fulfilment. According to Maslow,

these needs create internal pressures that influence behaviour. Finally, we explored the concept of Ikigai. Dillon (2022) defines Ikigai as finding meaning in everyday life, believing that the sum of small joys leads to a fuller life.

Reflecting on the lessons I've encountered during the first weeks of my career development journey, I've come to realize just how pivotal these experiences will be in shaping both my personal growth and my professional path. The insights gained, particularly around the alignment of my mindset and values with my actions, have deeply impacted the way I approach both my career and my life. One of the most influential ideas that I've embraced is the concept of a Growth Mindset. Understanding that challenges and setbacks are opportunities for growth, rather than insurmountable obstacles, has reshaped how I view personal development. This mindset, combined with the knowledge of personality frameworks like the MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator) and Holland's Theory of Career Choice, has been instrumental in my understanding of how I relate to others in both professional and personal contexts. Recognizing the diversity in personality types and career interests allows me to approach collaboration with empathy, awareness, and a deeper respect for the different ways in which people work and think.

In my future career, the ability to critically assess my own strengths and weaknesses will be invaluable in making informed, strategic decisions. This self-awareness will guide me in selecting the right work environments—places where I can thrive and where my skills are valued. It will also influence the way I approach team dynamics, helping me to better collaborate with individuals whose strengths complement mine. Understanding the subtle nuances in personality traits and preferences will allow me to foster more productive, inclusive, and harmonious relationships in both professional settings and personal interactions.

The concept of personal branding has also become a major focus for me. It has made me reflect more intentionally on how I present myself, not just in the workplace, but in all areas of my life. By being more authentic and intentional about the way I communicate my values, passions, and skills, I can build a brand that is both genuine and compelling. This has taught me that success isn't just about technical skills—it's about creating meaningful connections with others and cultivating a reputation that resonates with my values and expertise. The connections I build now, both personally and professionally, will pave the way for more opportunities, whether they be job offers, collaborations, or partnerships.

Additionally, the exploration of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs has had a profound impact on how I view my career journey. It has helped me to recognize that fulfilment doesn't happen in a linear progression—it's a series of stages, each with its own unique challenges and rewards. Understanding that I need to address my foundational needs, such as security, belonging, and self-esteem, before I can pursue self-actualization in my career is a crucial lesson. This awareness will help me stay grounded and focused on my personal well-being, which is essential in preventing burnout and ensuring sustained motivation. The stages of motivation, when viewed through the lens of Maslow's theory, also guide me in prioritizing the right aspects of my career at different points in time, giving me a clearer sense of purpose and direction.

Finally, the Japanese concept of Ikigai, which refers to the intersection of what you love, what you are good at, what the world needs, and what you can be paid for, has become a central idea in my career development. This holistic approach to finding meaning in both my personal and professional life reminds me to seek balance—ensuring that my career not only provides financial stability but also aligns with my deeper values and passions. The pursuit of Ikigai encourages me to live with intention, to seek out work that nourishes both my spirit and my skillset, and to align my professional path with a purpose that transcends mere job titles or pay checks. It's about creating a life where work and passion coalesce, leading to a more balanced, fulfilling, and purpose-driven existence.

These lessons, drawn from various perspectives and philosophies, will significantly shape my career trajectory in the coming years. However, they won't just influence my professional life; they will also guide me in making intentional decisions that positively impact my personal life. By integrating these principles, I can create a life that is not only successful in terms of career accomplishments but also rich in personal fulfilment, relationships, and meaningful experiences. In the end, the success I aim for is not solely defined by job titles or financial milestones, but by the depth of satisfaction and purpose I derive from both my career and my personal journey.

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