

UNIVERSITY OF WALES TRINITY SAINT DAVID

Program: BA (Hons) Business Management

Individual Assignment 2

Reflective Practice for Professionals

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Module: Community Engagement LCBB4002

Lecture D. Dale Clarke

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Introduction

One of the most important criteria for success in business management is identifying one's strengths, weaknesses, and competencies. If a person is unaware of what his or her preferences and requirements are, then there is a great probability that the person would not be able to excel in professional life. This report is being drafted to convey how a professional can escape all of the professional frustration through the practice of self-reflection. As per Wosnitza et al. (2018), reflective practices involve a deep introspection about an experience and the learning associated with it. It helps a person in making rational choices based on prior experiences. This can serve as a vital tool for choosing the right career path for a professional and also help in making the right decision at the right time. Reflective practices are also aimed at developing certain skills that can improve the quality of the person, enhance the skillset, and ultimately lead them towards success. It is also important to note that most reflective practices occur with the things that go wrong. Instead of having a pang of guilt and being in a gloomy state of mind, one can choose to learn from the faulty experience and integrate the learnings into becoming a better person. If this becomes a person's approach, it is possible that there would be nothing that could deter the person and build resilience in character, which is perhaps the most important skill in professional and private life. Therefore, this report will first expand upon the knowledge and purpose of reflective practices. It would then bring into light how such practices can impact communication and interpersonal skills. Lastly, the report will talk about one of the famous learning styles and how it can improve our understanding of self-reflection.

Reflection

Purpose of Reflective Practice

The purpose of reflective practices is to be honest about one's self. This is perhaps one of the most difficult skills that man finds difficult to develop in his personality. This is because honesty is required to be critical about the qualities one has and how such qualities can be improvised to become a better person. Without this consideration, any future practice would not be successful, and even if it's, one would not be able to learn or become a better person. This is further explained by (Wulf et al. 2018). As per the researcher, learning and being critical of oneself is a skill that helps one climb the corporate ladder. This is because it can have a significant bearing on future decisions. If a person has faulted on a task and he engages in self-criticism, then it is highly likely that the mistake will not be repeated, and next time, the person will actually ace the task.

In this sense, self-reflection can be termed as a way of practicing self-awareness. Consider a classical management situation where a manager is finding it difficult to communicate his ideas and feelings to his or her team members. In this situation, had the person been engaged in self-reflective practices, it would have helped him with the skills required to express himself. Similarly, self-reflection is an important tool for growing and developing one's self into a better professional. As defined by Haarhoff, Thwaites, and Bennett-Levy (2015), it is a process of realizing what is happening in the surroundings and how one can adjust to a new setting. In a professional world, one is confronted with challenges on a daily basis. Therefore, it is important that one engages in self-reflection not only during the performance appraisal or at the end of the year but on a daily basis. This would then help the person in accumulating all the needed skills to become a better person.

Further to this, management is defined as the art of managing people and tasks. This is not achieved in one day, but rather it is a continuous process that one slowly develops and integrates into the personality. This also means that management cannot be taught but is learned. It is learned when one does an introspection of everyday life and how others react. In other words, self-reflection can be regarded as an act of thinking about oneself and contemplating the behavior patterns to influence others.

Role of Reflective Practice in the Development of Effective Self-management, Communication and Interpersonal Skills

As stated above, management is a process that is linked with the development of interpersonal and communication skills. One cannot learn to communicate better unless the individual is able to reflect upon his or her skills. Self-reflection and interpersonal skills are discussed by Bennett-Levy and Thwaites (2007), who states that, unlike other skills, interpersonal skills are a type of cognitive development that is gained through practice. As per the authors, experiences are short-lived and are fleeting. This means that unless one is not able to reflect on the learnings, such experiences can be useless. Interpersonal skills can be classified as social skills that are governed by their own set of rules. Interpersonal skills are also not associated with one type of skill but are rather an accumulation of communication and behavioral patterns. Self-reflection can therefore help an individual in developing awareness of what rules one should follow in a social setting, what type of language to use to influence others and what are actions one must not use that could be counterproductive (Gun, 2011). For instance, in a professional setting, it is possible that one may not be able to improve the morale of the team or steer them towards success. This is most common in a target-based job where teams are consistently lagging behind and have no motivation left whatsoever.

Under these circumstances, the only thing that can truly help is the act of self-reflection. By reflecting on past experiences, one can use the type of communication and body language that could help in solving the challenge (Shalini, 2014). This is also one of the reasons why professionals with years of experience behind them are preferred for management roles as compared to professionals who do not possess the relevant experience. Experiences consciously or subconsciously help in the development of people skills, including verbal and non-verbal skills that can make a person emotionally intelligent. This then helps in making a person a competent team worker who is able to work towards conflict resolution and problem-solving. At work, one is always expected to work in internal and external teams, including suppliers, vendors, or investors. If a person is not able to reflect on the prior experience and has not gained the unsaid social norms, then it is possible that he or she may not be able to organize and achieve the deliverables. Handling such sensitive situations is thus the foremost task in business management and one that must be learned by everyone.

Kolb's Reflective Model

There is little doubt that each and every individual is distinct from others and is at a different development level. Therefore, to transform an individual into a leader, it is important that one must assess his or her skills critically and enlist the skills that must be targeted in order to become a more able individual are. As stated by Kolb (2005), a learning style inventory helps in determining what learning styles do the respondents have. The determination of learning style is carried through a questionnaire survey where a respondent is required to submit answers to particular questions. Questions can cover the type of personality one has, for instance, if the individual likes to learn in a personalized setting or in a group. From this learning style inventory emerges Kolb's Theory of Learning Styles. This is one of the profound works on the

development of individual learning styles. As discussed by Heffler (2001), Kolb's learning style is centered around a four-stage cycle. In the first stage, a person is able to accumulate personal experiences and observations that serve as the basis for determining new concepts.

The second process is also the central theme of this study which is self-reflection. In this process, one is encouraged to reflect on the new experiences or knowledge on the basis of pre-existing skillsets. Here one is also forced to think about the inconsistencies or knowledge gap that exists between different experiences and understanding. Here, a person should also try to move from specialization to generalization, implying a collective overview of individual experiences. In this stage, one is also expected to combine together different experiences and form a theory regarding social competencies. The theory of convergency of learning style is also important here because a person has to converge all the accumulated knowledge and think of a range of solutions to cope with social settings. The third and fourth step in Kolb's learning style deals with conceptualization and experimentation. Here the individual is expected to conceive new knowledge or skillset and then actively try it out in the social dynamics to validate the newly learned style.

Kolb's experiential learning style can then be attributed to the scientific process where an individual forms a hypothesis, gathers data or experiences, then conceptualizes a theory, and finally move toward the testing phase. The practice of self-reflection should also move in such a direction. It should follow a logical and linear flow beginning from newly collected impressions and ending with social experimentation. Furthermore, based on this scientific process, Kolb was able to form four representative learning styles. These were called Diverging, Assimilating, Converging and Accommodating. Each style is different from the others. For example, in diverging learning styles, an individual is able to work in groups and think of a problem from

creative dimensions. This is different from assimilating or accommodating, where an individual either adopts a logical approach or relies on intuitions, respectively.

Such type of classification is very important for simplifying how learning should take place. As stated earlier, business management is an art that requires the collection of experiences and adjusting this learning to the social setting. Management, therefore, needs to understand that individuals have very different skillsets and cannot be treated monolithically. This oversimplification makes learning suboptimal and without results. Based on Kolb's experiential learning, professional leaders can then do an assessment of a personality and direct the efforts based on the type of personality or social setting one is involved in.

Conclusion

To begin with, the study isolated the self-reflection practices and tended to set out how such practices can be used in a management setting. It was concluded that self-reflection is a continuous and evolving process that requires an individual to introspect and be more critical of oneself. This requires that an individual treats himself or herself objectively and without any prejudice. Such practices can significantly help in professional development. However, to do so, there are several theoretical models that one can rely on. This includes Kolb's experiential learning theory that shapes the learning process and how learning style can be tailored to the type of personality. Based on my own personal experience both as a student and a professional, I can relate to this very much because there are multiple types of personalities, and trainers often impart the training without considering the fact that there might be different personalities requiring different learning styles. Henceforth, it is important that reflection and learning happen with regard to the type of personality so that there is never a gap in learning. This is an important

consideration, and reflective techniques should also follow these guidelines. To summarize, self-reflection is a strategic process and must be done in a scientific manner.

References

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CPD Record

Name: Georgian Bularda		Covering the period from: To: January to April 2022
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Key dates	What did you do?	Why?	What did you learn from this?	How have/will you use this? Any further action?
<i>22 Jan</i>	<i>Learned assertiveness techniques at a workshop.</i>	<i>It's an important part of my objectives for the year.</i>	<i>Realised it's communicating from a rational place and that I can be more successful more of the time. It does require me to remain assertive even when others are not. There were models like SIN and using feelings plus the broken record technique that I believe will help me.</i>	<i>I will concentrate on using the techniques learned in work and outside it. I know it could be tough at first but I feel confident that it will help me in the long run. I have said to my team that they can review my notes from the workshop if they want so I have left my binder by the coffee machine.</i>
<i>20 Feb</i>	<i>I've been applying assertiveness in numerous situations following the workshop.</i>	<i>To practice what I learnt at the assertiveness workshop last month</i>	<i>Once you get into the swing of it, it's quite straightforward. Initially I had to concentrate on keeping the conversation constructive and I did slip into "you" statements and even some judgemental statements. The more I practice the easier it is becoming. There have been a couple of times with my staff where I have remained assertive and through that influenced a positive change in their behaviour.</i>	<i>I will run a short session for my team about assertiveness, offer one to one coaching to anyone who wants it and buy the book "Assertiveness at work" for the team. For the coming three months I will keep a note in my CPD Record of my major assertiveness successes and failures so that I keep learning and reflecting.</i>

30 Jan	Discuss the structure of the classes and the way lessons and exams are conducted	Important objectives for the year	Definition of community engagement	
6 Feb	Understand the principles of community engagement	Understanding Terminologies Relevance of Community Engagement	Benefits of Community Engagement The relevance and benefits of community engagement The nine principles of community engagement	We applied Johnson Matthey study case and discussed in class about principles of community engagement.
13 Feb	what it means to plan and design community engagement Understand the training and support required during the planning and designing phase	The barriers and challenges of effective community planning and design.		Seminar activity: Kickstarting Kingsbridge

20 Feb	Understanding the attributes and standards of community engagement. Understand how the approaches can be adopted, implemented and standardised	The attributes and standards of community engagement	The planning standards ensure that community members are involved at the start of the process. Adapt holistic approaches across all aspects of active and passive community engagement.	Seminar activity: Denis Eden Project We identified key points in the project implementation process and discussed in groups
27 Feb	Understand the different tools and platforms used in community engagement. To gain a deeper understanding of what, when and how to deploy the different tools and platforms.	What tools and platforms to deploy, when and how to deploy them.	Tools are practical, friendly, effective, fast, and cost-efficient Future search is a strategy used to determine the future expectations of community members	Seminar activity: Beyond bricks activity Discuss practical platforms to engage with each group and develop appropriate themes using the different platforms

6 March	Understand what sustainable community engagement is and what it is not. Understand the benefits of sustainable community engagement. Understand that sustainable community engagement is a path way to achieving sustainable development.	Sustainable community engagement as a pathway to achieving sustainable development.	Sustainable community engagement reflects community interdependences, hinged on protecting the 'Planet', the 'People' and their 'Prosperity'. Empowerment of community members to motivate them develop their social capital. Sustainable communities are created through continuous engagement.	Seminar activity: organise a community engagement process to launch the development of a community leisure centre, and discuss with our colleagues
13 March	Definition of reflection About importance	The importance of reflective cycle Gibb's reflective	We discovered the Kolb model and helpful tools to put it into practice	Activity Kolb Model Learning Style Inventory I discovered my own style of reflection

	of academic reflection	process Kolb's model for learning cycle		
20 March	What community engagement evaluate is. Ways to undertake an evaluation. Accepting change and its importance	The Monitoring and Evaluation Methods of Community Engagement. The dimension of Change.	Evaluation is an objective assessment and a critical aspect of community engagement processes. Evaluation is a self improvement programme.	Seminar activity: Creative spaces project