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Introduction

Employability can be defined as “the skills and abilities that allow you to be employed,” (EMPLOYABILITY | meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary, n.d.) The skills required for employability will tend to involve how skilled one is at listening to others, alongside the ability to follow decisions made by management accurately, whether it be alone and independently or effectively with a team. The academic skills required are often assumed to be the basic levels of maths and English an employer would expect their employees to have attained, but can also be logical thinking, problem solving, and innovative skills. In this essay I will cover 3 different topics: CV writing (an assembly of past qualifications in order to make you employable), paraphrasing (generalising a lengthy statement into shorter sentences but keeping the same meaning), and online learning (virtual courses, where no face-to-face teaching takes place), and how they have affected my employability and academic skills. I will reflect on them using the Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1988), which allows me to deeply analyse each topic with breadth and a true description of my thoughts and feelings at each stage of my learning, as well as how it came to affect my employability and academic skills once I had gained the knowledge of the topics.

Reflection Model

The Gibbs reflective cycle is a circular flow of elements which are used to analyse and reflect on an experience (Rumson, 2018). In this case, it will be three topics we have covered. The system includes a description of the incident, a factual account of what exactly happened. Secondly, I will cover the way I felt during this experience, as well as over. In relation to this, I will be able to include how other people felt about the same experience, and the conclusions they were able to take away from it. Next, I will be able to evaluate the situation as a whole, while weighing up the positives and negatives of the experience of each of the topics, followed by an analysis of the experience as a whole- what held me back, or what could have been done to improve the situation. Penultimately, I will give each topic a justified conclusion, with a reflection upon what I could have done differently if I were to experience the situation for the first time again, and the skills I would use to do so. The last and final step would be my action plan, which will detail the skills or training I could undertake to improve my understanding of the situation if it were to arise once again. This section is generally where to reflect on personal aspirations and self-improvement.

CVs

Firstly, a CV (curriculum vitae) covers the qualifications and the experiences a potential employee has had and deems applicable to the job role. Initially, when the topic was introduced to me, I felt interested because although I have a CV written personally, I was not sure of exactly what to put in there, and whether everything was appropriate to the industry or employment I could be applying for. The experience was particularly useful in the current situation of the pandemic, where unemployment has significantly risen due to covid-19, so being employable is exceedingly important as the competition for employment grows higher and stronger. However, some parts of the CV writing module were somewhat vague, I felt, such as being clear and listing your qualifications. By being too vague, I was somewhat unsure of what to write exactly and ensure it is relevant to my potential place of employment, so I did my own research to make some more sense of it. I was able to learn the particular parts of a CV, which included the personal statement; a page which describes your current place of employment along with your role, the ambitions you would like to achieve related to your job, such as aspirations to achieve higher managerial placements within a company or more responsibilities (Slingo, 2020). By outlining each separate component of a personal statement, I found it much easier to understand what exactly it is that I should write, and it helped me align my own CV to the standards I had learned of. I found that other people's experiences were somewhat similar to mine, in the sense the definition of a CV was somewhat vague and was unhelpful to a certain extent as they already had written a CV and these lessons simply helped to improve what they already had written, such as the components of a personal statement, but others

I had spoken to find it particularly useful for the foundations of their CVs, and have mentioned that they will continue to research the fine tuning of writing a CV in order to make sure their CVs are to the highest standard of employability. Learning about CV writing has given me further insight into employability, and I now have the skills to become more employable through the structure of my CV, as the content is much more relevant, and my personal statement is now better structured to be applicable for the role of employment I wish to enter. As my action plan, I intend to educate others on CV writing as and when they should need help, as I now understand the specific detail required and believe it would be insightful for others to know the details also. Moreover, I can suggest places of improvement for other's personal statements and CVs, but also within my own, and further research CV writing in relation to my place and industry of employment in order to fully gain a detailed version of what exactly my place of employment would seek in order to make me as employable as possible.

Paraphrasing

The second topic I will reflect on while utilising Gibb's model is paraphrasing. This is where a short sentence (or sentences) is formed as a result of an alteration of an original text or speech, while maintaining the same meaning (Bailey 2015). When texts are often very long or need to be referred to in essays without taking it word for word, paraphrasing is a technique used to clarify the main points and avoid plagiarism, but also can be used as evidence in support of personal views or points you may have previously made. When done correctly, paraphrasing will act as a tool for conveying messages much quicker and with clarity. Paraphrasing can be done by finding the synonyms of certain words in order to keep the exact same meaning. However, this method does run the risk of plagiarism to an extent because of how easy it is to miss a word or be unable to find a synonym for a certain word, particularly if you believe the original word gives the most meaning. Failure to remove the word can result in plagiarism. Therefore, although this method is easier, it is often at higher risk of plagiarism detection. Another method would be to restructure the entire sentence itself, in order to choose completely different words, where thoughts aren't influenced by the existing adjectives or verbs. By doing so, the writer is compelled to think of different words to fit in the sentence and will therefore find it easier to make the new alternate sentence much clearer. However, the downsides of this method are that sometimes restructuring a sentence can overcomplicate the way it had originally intended to be described, as the main focus of the sentence may be lost, or the message overall is less clear. When learning about paraphrasing myself, I felt at ease; I had already paraphrased many things without noticing I was doing it. I also felt a moment of realisation, as it occurred to me that paraphrasing is done in everyday life as well, when we convey messages that have been given to us and are used to send over to somebody else. Another form of communication I realised we use it in is non-verbal communication, a form of communication which includes gestures, sign, and facial expressions (Mehrabian, 2009). I found that for others, it was difficult to apply the knowledge to day-to-day life, as the concept seemed unfamiliar and slightly confusing when met with the idea of the same concept but in two different formats. On the other hand, this module went particularly well for me personally, as I was able to relate paraphrasing to my everyday life and notice when I'm doing it. This has allowed me to correct any paraphrasing I do to avoid plagiarism, and restructure sentences in order to make sure they are not the words of somebody else directly. The reason other people struggled with this topic was because it is hard to communicate how exactly to translate the same meaning into a different length, but by relating it to concept found in our lives, such as non-verbal communication, it has become much clearer. In the future, I will be able to use paraphrasing accurately, as well as being able to point out when others have paraphrased also.

Online learning

Throughout this course we have learnt majorly online, due to the outbreak of Covid-19. This has meant that there is no face-to-face learning, which has proven difficult at times. At first, I was content with online learning, but as it went on and more work was being set, I have found it increasingly difficult to keep up with work. It went well at first because I was prepared for work, despite my slight dismay at no interactive physical learning, which I tend to find helpful as I find that I learn through interacting with other people who can discuss the topic with me. However, as time went on, the topics became slightly more difficult to follow, and the structure of online learning tends to be repetitive and difficult to catch up on if you have missed anything. Online learning is useful to an extent, as you tend to save time going to and from lecture halls, which can consequently be used for extra research or going over a topic I may not have had full clarity on/ didn't exactly understand. However, students are very susceptible to falling behind, as others and myself had found. Once a singular piece of work was not complete, it was difficult to catch back up as remote learning implies the effects of no consequences as you rent actively going to lectures or personal sessions. However, to overcome this I did soon develop an understanding for any parts of learning I had missed out on, and others had done the same. The process of learning online was somewhat of a rollercoaster, and I found the same experience was led by my peers. To conclude, I have enjoyed the experience and lessons online learning has taught me- of organisation, extra research, and time management. I would say that my plan of action for the future would definitely be on top of my lectures and lessons, as it is increasingly important as we approach assignments with heavy weighting, when I won't have as much time to catch up on extra or missed lessons. In turn, this should give me more time to further research my modules and improve my chances of academic success. Consequently, this will improve my employability skills as the prevalence of Covid-19 will have a lasting impact on how business is run, which may mean I work from home while in the working world.

Conclusion

To conclude, all three experiences have greatly helped my employability. CV writing is a valuable tool which can directly affect employability and have used my learning to apply additional information to my CV. Paraphrasing has improved my day-to-day communication skills, which are also important for employability. Lastly, with the newly found nature of employment due to Covid-19, it is important to have online literacy and organisation to keep up with the working world.

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