

Analysis of my Academic and Employability Skills.

In this essay, I will analyse my achieved academic and employability skills. The skills that will be explored are IT skills; communication skills; team working and collaborative skills; time management skills, adaptability skills; self initiative skills and self management skills. I will make an attempt to explain how these achieved academic skills will be applied in employment settings.

When I enrolled on this course, I had no Information Technology skill at all. It was very difficult for me to access coursework materials as it was delivered on module electronically. However, learning Digital skills helped me a lot to improve my IT skills and I used these skills to access coursework in other modules.

However, these IT skills later became well useful in my job as a Residential Home Manager. I was able to apply these skills in electronic records keeping of all residents. As an organisation we were able to keep all electronic records of all our residents, financial records and payroll records. (Oyanagi, 2002), suggested that having IT skills provide good leadership, increased new opportunities of promotion in the workplace and improves communication skills and increases work performance.

According to (Brindley and Reynolds, 2011), listening, collaborating with others, bringing good ideas and good communication amongst team members are very important in the employment settings. Well cultured soft skills promote productivity, collaboration and in a modern work environment and all these attributes makes the organisation increase its competitiveness (Fiske and Jenkins, 2011).

Communication skills are some of the skills that I acquired as an academic, I learnt that there are different types of communication which are classified in verbal and non verbal. Examples of verbal communication are talking, shouting, calling, phone calls, meetings. Non verbal communication is written, visual, sign language, body language. All these different means of communication were used during our lectures. However, in Residential Home Care, employment settings we were able to use all these different means of communication especially during residents activities time (*Journal of Oncology Practice*, 2007). We had residents who needed different communication needs and being abraise with these different communication skills made caring for the residents easy because their communication needs were adequately met and communication barriers were eradicated. In work meetings different communication methods were used such as visual and non visual means of communication to enhance audience attention and participation (Brindley, P. and Reynolds, S., 2011). In work settings effective communication is a creative way of solving work related problems and it reduces conflict in workplaces. Effective communication is a good tool to build strong relationships with customers, work

colleagues and it help to build improvement of time management and organizational skills.

Time management is another very important skill which I acquired as an academic. Good time management has always kept me on top of my school work and assignments. This enabled me to be able to use my time in a balanced and productive way. Good time management was achieved through prioritizing, delegation, goal setting, multi-tasking, problem solving, strategic thinking, scheduling and good decision making. Good time management made me accomplish my goals in the shortest possible time and this created extra free time which I used productively on my other goals. I have learnt that good time management had the ultimate effect of career success and stress reduction in my life. Good time management has enabled me to start doing my academic assignment in time and to avoid unnecessary distractions.

(Maree, J. and Fabio, A., 2018.) described time management as a process of planning and organising how to divide your precious time between specified activities. The main advantage of good time management is that it enables you to work smarter and you can get more work done in little time even in a pressurised environment, you still strive.

Application of good time management skills in employment settings has many advantages such as completing tasks on time; producing high quality work; improves productivity and efficiency; prevents stress and anxiety; no room for procrastination; improvement of quality of life; promotes time for leisure and recreation and promotes career growth and opportunities. Application of good time management skills at my workplace has lead me to be awarded prizes such as being the worker of the month on three occasions. (*Journal of Oncology Practice*, 2007) pointed out that employees who are good at time management are the most productive and efficient in their jobs.

As an academic, I have acquired some team working skills. During lectures at the University, there are group activities which we were asked to accomplish whilst split into groups. At first, I really struggled to fit in a group setting. However, I quickly realized that for a team to function properly and fulfill its full potential, all the team members need to work hard to achieve the team goals. I learnt the art of being an effective team player. I learnt that for a team to function efficiently, it is important for the team members to communicate efficiently and effectively. Every team member must be responsible; honesty; need to actively listen; must have empathy; must be able to collaborate; have awareness; must have clearly defined roles and specified goals. According to (McEwan, et al., 2017), a team player must have the ability to manage and delegate to others, take on responsibility and build positive working relationships that help team members to achieve their goals and business objectives.

Team working is a skill that can easily transfer from academic into employment settings (Ataman,G. 2020) .The management at my workplace have always set clear goals for the team and they encourage the team to engage in informal social activities to promote team bonding and teamwork is always rewarded handsomely. In employment settings management understands that teams have strengths and weaknesses but they always encourage teams to exploit their strengths so as to achieve their potential (Cooke, M., 2016). A team with good dynamics may be constructive and productive, always demonstrate mutual understanding and self-corrective behaviour. Strong team dynamics are often characterised by being able to solve problems faster and generally produce high quality results (Shuffler et al., 2018). They have a good bank of experience and diversity of knowledge and this often results in faster response times and excellent customer service. A good team always feels mutually accountable for their work and encourages differences in opinions; has conflict management; has commitment and has utmost respect and trust for all team members.

The academic years equipped me with skills such as self-management and self initiative, such skills were very important tools which I used to conduct my own studies and information search needed to complete assignments. They were very important skills for my studies because they made me push myself to strive for excellence.

However, in work settings these skills enabled me to adapt to change in environment. Being adaptive to change in the employment environment is an attribute which is desirable to employers hence interviewees who resemble these attributes are most likely to be given the jobs because of their adaptivity and transition to change in settings. (Cooke, M. 2016) argued that adaptive employees find it easy to settle in new employment settings and their productivity is not affected by the change in work environment. Some scholars suggest that employees who can adapt to changes in working environments are important when working on projects because they are able to develop strategies and implement different approaches in doing their job (McEwan, et al. 2017).

I have always managed to achieve my goals by creating a “to do list” which were my set goals.as I execute my “to do list”, this often presents me with opportunities to innovate thinking and being creative in solving problems and at the same time portraying some good leadership qualities. I was able to work effectively out of my own initiative and without any management supervising me. This made me very productive and as a result of my hard work, I was awarded accolades such as worker of the month on a few occasions.

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My academic time also presented an opportunity for me to develop a Personal Development Plan for my academic career. A personal development plan enforces that learning is lifelong and life wide activity (Maree, J. and Dii Fabio, A. 2018). It

provides students with an opportunity to reflect on their own learning and achievements. It creates an innovation to plan for a student's own education and career development. It is a vital core to the learning process which helps the learner with an opportunity to find out whether set goals or skills are being attained. Personal development plans can be used in employment settings to evaluate whether goals or skills are being attained. I used the personal development plan to evaluate my academic and skills progress. It was a very effective yard stick which I used effectively to evaluate my successes and failures. Areas that needed improvement were easily highlighted and successes were noted easily too. Many educationists agreed that we learn differently using different learning models such as; activist; the pragmatist; the reflector and the theorist (Littlejohn, A., 2002). I have realised that my learning style is the pragmatist. A pragmatist is someone who likes to solve problems by experimenting to improve techniques and can make a practical decision and they learn from a proven good practice. (Brindley, P. and Reynolds, S., 2011) defined an Activist as someone who learns by doing. An activists believe in hands-on approach, is open minded to learning and involves themselves fully without any biases in new experiences. Their main aim is to understand the theory behind the action. Reflector learning style involves spending a lot of time reading about the subject and watching others trying things out. A theorist learns by involving models and theories supported by a lot of background information.

I have managed to use a personal development plan to track my progress in the attainment of skills such as note taking; academic writing; paraphrasing and correct way of referencing my academic writing.

I have discovered that a personal development plan is an effective skill that promotes productivity. I have used my personal development plan to set my goals; how to prioritise those goals; set myself deadlines; recognise opportunities and threats; developing my skills and knowledge; use of the support networks and to measure my progress. A personal development plan has helped to effectively manage my time; to cultivate resilience; develop emotional intelligence. My active listening skills have developed to a high standard and my mindset has shown growth and the desire to learn new things was evident in attitude. I have noticed a big improvement in my public speaking skills during team meeting sessions and my emotional intelligence skills were developed to a high standard and this was also supported by (*Clinical & Experimental Ophthalmology*, 2016).

In conclusion, I have established that most of the academic skills are transferable into employment settings. Some of these skills are classified as being soft skills but they are very important for the successes of businesses. Soft skills are applied in employment settings to improve business competitiveness and productivity. Personal development plans are used by management in most businesses to evaluate the productivity of employees and employee professional developmental needs.

Professional developmental needs of employees are met by recommending employees to attend refresher courses, so that employees are kept updated with new business trends. Skills such as team working; collaboration; Information Technology and communication are very important for the success of all businesses such that all employers tend to look out for such attributes during recruitment interviews.

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