

A Reflection on My Journey:

Creating and Compiling the Evidence of Experiential Learning for My Portfolio

Abstract

Embarking on the journey of compiling and presenting a portfolio of experiential learning has been a profoundly transformative experience, shaping my personal and professional life in unexpected ways. I envisioned a straightforward process where my accumulated experiences would seamlessly translate into documented evidence. However, this journey proved to be far more intricate, involving unforeseen challenges, time constraints, and emotional strain.

I have been exploring various reflective practice models, specifically, Rolfe (2001), Driscoll (1994; 2007), Schön (1991), and Gibbs (1998), to enhance my professional development and improve my teaching practice. Reflective practice involves critically analysing experiences to gain insights, improve effectiveness, and promote continuous learning. My goal was to deepen my understanding of these models and apply them systematically to refine my teaching methods.

I was very interested to explore different reflective practice models, believing they would provide structured frameworks for self-assessment and improvement, I was overwhelmed by the complexity and range of approaches offered by each model. In reflective practice, practitioners engage in a continuous cycle of self-observation and self-evaluation in order to understand their own actions and the reactions they prompt in themselves and in learners (Brookfield, 1995). As I engaged with Rolfe, Driscoll, Schön, and Gibbs models, there were moments of clarity when uncovering new insights and strategies for enhancing my teaching practice. Yet, I also encountered challenges in selecting the most suitable model for specific reflective situations and applying it consistently.

Adopting reflective practice models has been highly beneficial for me, each model offered unique perspectives and methodologies for analysing experiences, identifying strengths, and pinpointing areas for development. Schön's reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action distinction provided insights into immediate and ongoing improvements, which was my main aim throughout my journey creating and compiling the evidence of experiential learning.

In this reflection, I will critically analyse my journey through the lens of Schön's Reflective Practice Model (Schön, 1991), focusing on the challenges I encountered, the coping strategies I developed, and the profound impact this experience has had on my professional development.

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1.0 Initial Planning and Time Management

When I began this journey, I felt confident in my ability to manage the portfolio process effectively, drawing on my background in education and experience in project management. The integration of project based learning and blended learning provides a unique intersection for developing 21st century skills in the classroom (Alamri, 2021). Four C's represent a set of four essential skills namely Communication, Collaboration, Critical thinking, and Creativity (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009). Strong project management capabilities enhance the ability to lead teams, manage resources effectively, and oversee complex initiatives, all of which contribute to improved institutional performance and student outcomes (Bredillet, 2010). By embedding project management skills into education, institutions ensure that students are knowledgeable and possess the competencies to apply this knowledge effectively in diverse professional scenarios (Even, 2024). I created a detailed plan, breaking down the portfolio requirements into manageable sections and setting realistic deadlines for each phase, I believed that with careful planning, I could balance this project with my other commitments. However, as I delved deeper into the process, I encountered significant challenges that required me to adapt and adjust my approach, a process Schön (1991) describes as reflection-in-action.

1.1 Underestimating the Complexity of Reflection

One challenge I faced was underestimating the time and cognitive effort required for reflection (Gibbs, 1998; Kolb, 1984) and self-assessment (Samuels and Betts, 2007). Reflecting on years of professional experience and identifying key learning moments that could be articulated in a coherent and meaningful way proved to be far more time consuming than I had anticipated. I initially planned to spend a few hours each week on reflection, but I quickly realised that this task required far more time and emotional energy than I had allocated.

This realisation forced me to reflect-in-action, adjusting my approach to time management, I had to allocate more time to reflection, revisiting my experiences with a deeper level of analysis, this process required significant emotional engagement as I revisited challenging moments in my career, critically analysing them to extract meaningful insights. This reflective process was mentally exhausting, and I found myself questioning whether I had the stamina to continue at this pace. Recognising the need to adapt my approach, I was able to make the necessary adjustments to my plan, allowing me to continue progressing, albeit at a slower pace than originally anticipated.

1.2 Managing Documentation and Evidence

Another significant challenge I encountered was managing the vast amount of documentation and evidence I had accumulated over the years, sorting through this material to find the most relevant and impactful pieces was a daunting task. I had assumed that this would be a

straightforward process of organising and selecting documents, I soon realised that this task required a high level of critical thinking (Argyris and Schön, 1974; Brookfield, 1987) and discernment. The challenges I faced in managing documentation and evidence also highlighted the importance of flexibility and adaptability in reflective practice, I had to accept that my initial plan was overly optimistic and that I needed to adjust my expectations and timelines accordingly. This realisation was a difficult one, as it required me to acknowledge that I was not progressing as quickly as I had hoped, embracing this flexibility, I was able to maintain a sense of progress, even when things did not go according to plan.

2.0 Framing My Experiences

I approached the task of framing my experiences (Weick, 1995) with a sense of confidence and enthusiasm, believing that my years of professional experience, combined with my academic background, would provide a strong foundation for the portfolio. As I began the process of selecting and organising my experiences, I quickly realised that this task was far more challenging than I had anticipated.

2.1 Initial Challenges in Framing Experiences

Determining which experiences were most relevant to the portfolio's objectives was challenging, I had accumulated a vast array of experiences over the years, each with its own significance and learning outcomes. I approached this task by creating a comprehensive list of my experiences, thinking that I could simply select the most impactful ones, as I began to review this list, I realised that many of my experiences were interrelated and that isolating them would not accurately reflect the depth and breadth of my learning.

This prompted me to engage in reflection-in-action, as I re-evaluated my approach to framing my experiences, rather than focusing solely on individual experiences, I began to look for patterns and themes that connected them using simple thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). This process of identifying overarching themes allowed me to frame my experiences (Brookfield, 2017) in a way that highlighted the continuity of my learning and development over time. For example, I noticed that many of my experiences were centred around themes of leadership (Goleman, 2011, 2017; Goleman et al., 2002; Palmer et al., 2001), collaboration, and problem-solving, organising my experiences around these themes, I was able to create a more cohesive and compelling narrative that reflected my growth as a professional.

2.2 Revisiting and Reframing Experiences

Whilst framing my experiences (Weick, 1995), I also engaged in reflection-on-action, the practice of engaging in a deliberate review of a situation after it has happened (Schön, 1987). Looking back on the decisions I had made and evaluating their effectiveness, an insight I gained from this process was the importance of revisiting and reframing my experiences in

light of new information or perspectives (Bolman and Deal, 2017). For example, I initially framed one of my experiences as a straightforward example of management, focusing on the technical aspects, upon further reflection, I realised that this experience also involved significant elements of leadership and team dynamics, which were equally important to the overall outcome.

I revisited and reframed this experience (Schön, 1987) shifting the focus from the technical details to the leadership and interpersonal skills I had developed. This process of revisiting and reframing experiences was not always easy, as it required me to confront and challenge my initial assumptions, it was also one of the most valuable aspects of the reflective process, as it allowed me to gain deeper insights into my learning and development.

2.3 Integrating New Insights

I often encountered new ideas or perspectives that prompted me to rethink my approach. For example, I attended a professional development workshop on reflective practice midway through the portfolio development process, introducing me to new concepts and techniques for reflection, such as the use of reflective journaling and peer feedback. These new insights prompted me to revisit and revise my portfolio, incorporating these techniques into my reflective practice. Changing my leaning style helped synthesise new information (Kolb, 1985; Dunn, 1990; Honey and Mumford, 1992; 2000). When I adopt a pragmatic learning style, I am more likely to apply theoretical concepts to real-world situations, which translates to the successful application of leadership, management, and conflict resolution models. When I adopt a reflective learning style, I am able to critically analyse situations, absorb and process information thoughtfully.

One specific example of this was my decision to include reflective elements as part of my portfolio, I had focused primarily on documenting my experiences and linking them to specific competencies, after attending the workshop, I realised the value of including a more personal and introspective element in my portfolio. The reflective elements allowed me to capture my thoughts, emotions, and insights in real-time, providing a richer and more authentic account of my learning journey. This decision was a direct result of reflection-in-action, as I adapted my approach in response to new information and insights.

3.0 Unforeseen Events and Delays

As I progressed through the portfolio development process, several unforeseen events significantly delayed my progress, I had to be resilient and cope with these events. Coping strategies are the cognitive and behavioural changes that result from the management of stress (Chen, 2016; Wu et al., 2020), I used two types of coping strategies, problem focused coping and emotion focused coping (Chen, 2016; Wu et al., 2020). These events provided

opportunities for reflection-on-action, as I looked back on the challenges I faced and evaluated my responses to them.

3.1 Coping with Health Issues

One of the most significant unforeseen events was a sudden health issue that required immediate medical attention and an extended recovery period. This unexpected event not only disrupted my ability to work on the portfolio but also affected my mental and emotional wellbeing. The stress of dealing with a health crisis (Lazarus, 1966), combined with the pressure of falling behind on my portfolio, created a sense of overwhelming anxiety (Othman, et al., 2019).

Reflecting on this experience, I realise that my initial response to the health crisis was one of frustration and helplessness, I felt as though I had lost control over my progress, and the uncertainty surrounding my recovery added to my anxiety. However, as I engaged in reflection-on-action, I recognised the need to adjust my expectations and priorities. I had to accept that my health was a priority and that I needed to take the time necessary to recover fully before resuming work on the portfolio (Hockey, 2011; Hopstaken, 2015).

This experience taught me the importance of self-compassion and the need to recognise my limitations. I had always prided myself on my ability to manage multiple commitments and maintain a high level of productivity. This health crisis forced me to confront the reality that I could not always control the pace of my progress. By reflecting on this experience, I was able to develop a more realistic and compassionate approach to my work, recognising the need to prioritise my well-being.

3.2 Transitioning into a New Role as a Lecturer

During this period, I also transitioned into a new role as a lecturer at a college. While this was an exciting career move, it came with a steep learning curve and a significant increase in responsibilities, the demands of preparing lectures, grading assignments, and supporting students left me with little time or energy to dedicate to my portfolio.

Reflecting on this experience, I realised that I had underestimated the challenges associated with starting a new job (Van Rensburg, 2014). I had assumed that I would be able to balance my new responsibilities with my portfolio work, but the reality was quite different, the lack of support from the college in terms of workload management and professional development further exacerbated the situation.

Engaging in reflection-on-action (Schön, 1991), I recognised the need to adjust my expectations and priorities once again, I had to accept that my new role required a significant amount of time and energy and that I needed to be patient with myself as I adjusted to these

new demands. This reflection also highlighted the importance of seeking support and guidance from others, as I realised that I could not navigate these challenges alone.

4.0 Aligning My Experiences with Learning Outcomes

Aligning my experiences with the learning outcomes of the portfolio was another significant challenge that required both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. The portfolio required me to demonstrate specific competencies and learning outcomes, and it was essential that my experiences were presented in a way that clearly evidenced these outcomes, this task required careful analysis and reflection, as I needed to ensure that my experiences were not only relevant but also aligned with the specific criteria set out in the portfolio guidelines.

4.1 Identifying Relevant Learning Outcomes

The first step in this process was to identify the learning outcomes that were most relevant to my experiences, this task was more complex than I had initially anticipated, as it required me to engage in a detailed analysis of both my experiences and the portfolio's learning outcomes. I had to consider not only the content of my experiences but also the skills and competencies I had developed as a result. For example, one of the learning outcomes related to effective communication, I had several experiences that involved communication and collaboration, but I needed to identify which ones best demonstrated my proficiency in these areas.

Engaging in reflection-in-action (Schön, 1991), I continually revisited and revised my selections, as I gained a deeper understanding of the learning outcomes and how they related to my experience, this process was iterative and often required me to make difficult decisions about which experiences to include and which to leave out. For example, I initially included an experience that involved leading a team in a high-pressure situation, thinking that it was a strong example of leadership and collaboration, upon further reflection, I realised that this experience did not fully align with the specific learning outcomes related to communication and collaboration. As a result, I decided to replace it with another experience that more clearly demonstrated these competencies.

4.2 Mapping Experiences to Learning Outcomes

Once I had identified the relevant learning outcomes, the next step was to map my experiences to these outcomes in a way that clearly demonstrated my learning and development. As I looked back on my experiences and analysed how they related to the learning outcomes, one of the challenges I encountered was ensuring that my experiences were not only relevant but also sufficiently detailed to provide clear evidence of my competencies.

To address this challenge, I engaged in a process of critical reflection (Brookfield, 1995; Mezirow, 1990), analysing my experiences in detail and identifying specific examples that

demonstrated the learning outcomes. For example, one of the learning outcomes related to leadership and management. I had several experiences that involved these skills, but I needed to provide specific examples that clearly evidenced my proficiency. After reflecting (Schön, 1991) on my experiences, I decided to focus on a particular project where I had to make a difficult decision under pressure. I provided a detailed account of the situation, the decision-making process, and the outcome, linking each aspect of the experience to the relevant learning outcomes.

This process of mapping experiences to learning outcomes was not always straightforward, and it often required me to revisit and revise my work. I was able to critically evaluate my approach and make necessary adjustments, this process was essential to ensuring that my portfolio effectively demonstrated my learning and development.

5.0 Setting Clear Goals and Intentions

Setting clear goals and intentions was a critical aspect of my portfolio development process, requiring both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Schön, 1991) I knew that I needed to establish clear goals to guide my work and ensure that I remained focused on the portfolio's objectives. I realised that setting goals was not a one-time task, but an ongoing process that required continuous reflection and adjustment.

5.1 Establishing Initial Goals

At the beginning of the portfolio development process, I set several initial goals to guide my work, these goals were based on the portfolio's learning outcomes and my own personal and professional objectives. One of my goals was to demonstrate my proficiency in applying coaching practice using various coaching models, FUEL (Zenger and Stinnett, 2010), OSKAR (de Shazer, 1991) and GROW (Whitmore, 1992) and mentoring practice using various mentoring models, ONSIDE (Hobson, 2016), TEAM and GROUP (Egan, 2009; Clutterbuck, 2014), as these were key competencies that I wanted to highlight in my portfolio. I also set goals related to time management, aiming to complete each section of the portfolio within a specific timeframe.

Engaging in reflection-in-action (Schön, 1991), I continually revisited and revised these goals as I progressed through the portfolio development process, as I encountered new challenges or gained new insights, I often needed to adjust my goals to reflect the changing circumstances.

5.2 Evaluating and Adjusting Goals

Throughout the portfolio development process, I continually evaluated my progress towards my goals and making necessary adjustments, one insight I gained from this process was the importance of flexibility and adaptability. While it was important to have clear goals to guide

my work, I also needed to be open to adjusting these goals in response to new information or changing circumstances.

For example, I aimed to complete the portfolio within a specific timeframe, as I progressed through the process, I encountered several unexpected challenges that required me to extend this timeline. I felt frustration and disappointment, as I had hoped to complete the portfolio within my original timeframe. Upon reflection, I realised that extending the timeline was necessary to ensure that the portfolio met the required standards. Engaging in reflection-on-action (Schön, 1991), I was able to reframe this challenge (Weick, 1995), as an opportunity to deepen my learning and produce a higher-quality portfolio.

Another important aspect of evaluating and adjusting goals was the need to balance my personal and professional responsibilities, as I progressed through the portfolio development process, I encountered several challenges related to time management and work-life balance. I continually reassessed my goals and priorities to ensure that I was maintaining a healthy balance between my work on the portfolio and my other responsibilities. For example, I made a conscious decision to set aside specific times each week for family activities and self-care, even if it meant extending the timeline for completing the portfolio. This decision was a direct result of reflection-on-action (Schön, 1991), as I recognised the importance of maintaining a holistic approach to life and work.

6.0 Incorporating Substantive Reflection

Incorporating substantive reflection (Schön, 1991), was a central component of my portfolio development process, requiring both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, reflective practice (Schön, 1991), is essential to deep learning and professional development, as it allows individuals to critically analyse their experiences, identify areas for improvement, and make informed decisions about their future actions. Throughout the portfolio development process, I engaged in ongoing reflection, both in the moment (reflection-in-action) and after the fact (reflection-on-action) (Schön, 1991), to gain a deeper understanding of my learning and development.

6.1 Engaging in Ongoing Reflection

One of the key aspects of incorporating substantive reflection into my portfolio involved continuously reflecting on my experiences as they unfolded, making adjustments to my approach as needed, and capturing my insights in real-time. Another important aspect of reflection-in-action (Schön, 1991), was the use of reflective journaling to capture my thoughts, emotions, and insights in real-time, this practice allowed me to engage in deep and ongoing reflection, providing a richer and more authentic account of my learning journey. For example, as I worked on a particularly challenging section of the portfolio, I used my reflective journal to

document my thoughts and emotions as I navigated the challenges. This practice not only helped me to process my experiences in the moment but also provided valuable material for my reflection later in the process.

6.2 Analysing and Synthesising Reflections

I incorporated substantive reflection (Schön, 1991), into my portfolio development process, analysing my reflections, and synthesising the insights gained to inform future actions, this process was essential to ensuring that my portfolio provided a comprehensive and well-rounded account of my learning and development. For example, as I reviewed my reflective journal and other materials, I noticed several recurring themes, such as the importance of leadership, collaboration, and problem solving in my professional development. Identifying these themes, I was able to create a more cohesive and compelling narrative that highlighted the continuity of my learning over time.

Another important aspect of the process of evaluating the effectiveness of my reflective practice is making necessary adjustments. For example, as I reviewed my portfolio and reflective journal, I realised that I had initially focused more on the technical aspects of my experiences and less on the interpersonal and emotional aspects. This realisation prompted me to revisit and revise several sections of my portfolio, incorporating more reflection (Schön, 1991), on the emotional and interpersonal dimensions of my experiences.

7.0 Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice

Bridging the gap between theory and practice was a central challenge of my portfolio development process, requiring both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Schön, 1991), the portfolio required me to not only document my experiences but also to link them to relevant theories and concepts, demonstrating how I had applied theoretical knowledge in practical situations. This task required careful analysis and reflection, as I needed to ensure that my experiences were not only relevant but also provided clear evidence of my ability to apply theory to practice.

7.1 Applying Theoretical Knowledge in Practice

One aspect of bridging the gap between theory and practice was the application of theoretical knowledge in practical situations, I continually reflected on how I had applied relevant theories and concepts in my professional experiences. For example, one of the key theories that informed my practice was Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, which emphasises the importance of learning through experience and reflection. As I worked on my portfolio, I reflected (Schön, 1991), on how I had applied this theory in my professional practice, identifying specific examples where I had used experiential learning to develop new skills and competencies.

Another important aspect of reflection-in-action (Schön, 1991), was the process of adapting theoretical knowledge to fit the specific context and challenges of my work (Martin et al., 2012; Sternberg, 2019).

For example, I often found that the theoretical frameworks I had learned in my academic studies did not always align perfectly with the realities of my professional practice. In these situations, I engaged in reflection-in-action (Schön, 1991), to adapt and modify the theories to fit the specific context of my work. This process of adaptation was essential to ensuring that my portfolio accurately reflected my ability to apply theory to practice in a flexible and context-sensitive manner.

During teaching sessions, I use a blend of learning theories, namely Connectivism, Humanism, Cognitivism, and Behaviourism. Connectivism focuses on using technology and networks for learning; Humanism emphasises personal growth and self-actualisation; Cognitivism centres on mental processes and understanding; and Behaviourism relies on reinforcement and observable behaviours. The goal was to create a comprehensive, diverse learning environment that caters to various student needs and enhances overall engagement and understanding. Learner-centred methods have repeatedly been shown to be superior to the traditional teacher-centred approach to teaching (Bullard et al., 2008).

The integration of these learning theories had several positive outcomes. Connectivism engaged students with technology, making learning more interactive and relevant to the digital age. Humanism fostered a supportive and student-centred environment, encouraging personal growth. Cognitivism helped students develop critical thinking skills and deepen their understanding of the material. Behaviourism provided structure and clear expectations, enhancing classroom management. However, balancing these theories was challenging, and some students struggled with the rapid shifts in teaching methods. Education research shows that incorporating active learning strategies into university courses significantly enhances student-learning experiences (Freeman et al., 2014; Theobald et al., 2020).

7.2 Reflecting on the Application of Theory

In addition to applying theoretical knowledge in practice, I engaged in reflection-on-action (Schön, 1991), to critically analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of my application of theory, this process involved looking back on my experiences, identifying areas where I had successfully applied theoretical knowledge, and recognising areas where I could have improved my approach. Insights I gained from this process was the importance of being mindful of the limitations of theoretical frameworks and being open to adapting them as needed.

One specific example of reflection-on-action (Schön, 1991), was my analysis of a leadership experience where I had applied transformational leadership theory, I believed that my application of the theory had been effective, as the team had achieved its goals and the overall outcome was positive. However, upon further reflection, I realised that there were aspects of the experience where I could have applied the theory more effectively, particularly in terms of providing individualised support and feedback to team members.

I reflected (Schön 1991), on my experiences of applying theoretical knowledge in practice, and identified lessons that I could apply to future situations, these lessons included the importance of being flexible and adaptable in the application of theory, the value of seeking feedback from others, and the need to be mindful of the limitations of theoretical frameworks. Synthesising these insights and applying them to future practice, I was able to deepen my learning and improve my ability to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

8.0 Stress and Anxiety

The accumulation of these challenges led to significant stress and anxiety throughout the portfolio development process, the constant pressure to meet deadlines, coupled with the unforeseen delays, created a sense of urgency that was difficult to manage. Engaging in reflection-on-action (Schön 1991), I sought to understand the sources of my stress and develop strategies to cope with it effectively.

8.1 Self-Imposed Pressure and Fear of Failure

One of the most challenging aspects of this process was the internal pressure I placed on myself to succeed. As someone who has always prided themselves on their academic and professional achievements, the thought of not completing the portfolio to the best of my ability was difficult to accept, this self-imposed pressure contributed to feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt, as I struggled to balance the demands of my new job, family responsibilities, and portfolio work. I recognised that my fear of failure was a significant source of my stress and anxiety, I had set high expectations for myself, and the thought of not meeting those expectations was daunting. By engaging in reflection-on-action (Schön, 1991), I was able to develop a more balanced perspective. I realised that my worth was not solely determined by my academic achievements and that it was important to be kind to myself during this challenging time.

This reflection also highlighted the importance of seeking support and reassurance from others. I realised that I did not have to navigate this journey alone and that it was okay to ask for help when needed. Reaching out to colleagues, friends, and family members, I was able to gain a sense of perspective and reassurance, which helped to alleviate some of the pressure I had placed on myself.

8.2 Coping with the Lack of Institutional Support

The stress and anxiety were further compounded by the lack of support and guidance from the college. As a new lecturer, I expected a certain level of mentorship and professional development opportunities, particularly in relation to managing my workload and balancing my portfolio work. The reality was quite different, the college was undergoing significant organisational changes, and resources were stretched thin. As a result, I received minimal support, which left me feeling isolated and overwhelmed.

Reflecting on this experience, I recognised that my expectations of institutional support were unrealistic given the circumstances, the college was facing its own challenges, and I needed to adjust my expectations accordingly. This reflection also highlighted the importance of developing my own coping strategies and support networks, while the college may not have provided the level of support I had hoped for, I was able to reach out to colleagues and peers for advice and encouragement.

This experience taught me the importance of resilience and adaptability in the face of challenges. Engaging in reflection-on-action (Schön, 1991), I was able to develop a more proactive approach to managing stress and anxiety, recognising the need to take responsibility for my own well-being and seek out the support I needed.

9.0 Impact on Family Life and Strain on Relationships

As the pressure of the portfolio work mounted, I found myself spending less time with my family, particularly during evenings and weekends when I would typically be more available. The need to work late into the night and on weekends meant that I missed important family activities and quality time with my loved ones. This shift in priorities strained my relationships, as my family had to adjust to my increased absence and the emotional toll that the stress was taking on me.

Reflecting (Schön, 1991), on this experience, I recognised that the pursuit of academic and professional success had come at a significant cost to my family life, the internal conflict I felt was difficult to navigate, as I struggled to balance my personal and professional responsibilities. Engaging in reflection-on-action, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of my choices on my family and identify strategies to mitigate this impact.

This reflection also highlighted the importance of communication and setting boundaries, I realised that I needed to be more transparent with my family about the demands of the portfolio work and the challenges I was facing. Involving them in the process and seeking their understanding and support, I was able to alleviate some of the guilt and internal conflict I was feeling.

9.2 Prioritising Family and Wellbeing

As I continued to reflect on the impact of this journey on my family life, I recognised the need to prioritise my well-being and the well-being of my family, I realised that while the portfolio was important, and it was not worth sacrificing my relationships and overall happiness. This reflection led me to make more intentional choices about how I allocated my time and energy, ensuring that I made space for family time and self-care.

This shift in priorities had a positive impact on my wellbeing and my relationships, setting clear boundaries and making time for the things that mattered most to me, I was able to regain a sense of balance and perspective. This experience taught me the importance of maintaining a holistic approach to life, recognising that professional success should not come at the expense of personal well-being.

10.0 Conclusion

The journey of creating and compiling the evidence of experiential learning for my portfolio has been a profound and transformative experience. Through the process of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Schön, 1991), I have gained a deeper understanding of my values, my priorities, and myself. The challenges I encountered along the way, time management, unforeseen events, stress and anxiety, and the impact on family life, have all contributed to my growth as a professional and as an individual.

This journey has taught me the importance of flexibility, resilience, and self-compassion. I have learned that it is okay to adjust my expectations and timelines in response to changing circumstances and that seeking support and guidance from others is a sign of strength, not weakness. Most importantly, I have learned that my worth is not solely defined by my academic and professional achievements, but by the relationships I nurture and the balance, I maintain in my life.

As I continue on my professional journey, I will carry these lessons with me, recognising the value of reflective practice in navigating the complexities of life and work. This experience has not only enriched my professional development but has also deepened my understanding of what it means to live a fulfilling and balanced life.

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