

Academic & Employability Skills

Reflection

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**Reflection on my learning in Academic & Employability
Module (BMSW4001) using Gibbs' Reflective model**

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Academic and Employability Skills

Reflection

Introduction

A reflection is an important tool for both instructors and learners. Reflective writing, in particular, helps in creating self-awareness among the learner. Reflection enables students to examine their learning experiences to understand how much knowledge they have gained in the course, and how much they still need to learn. In the recent past, many instructors are tapping on reflective writing skills to help their students develop a wide variety of other skills, including essay writing, public speaking, and debating among other academic skills. Apart from enabling the students to examine their learning experience, reflection helps them figure out the possible applications of the knowledge gained in their career in the future. Several studies indicate that a recurrent reflective activity develops the students in critical thinking abilities, as well as in reimagining the future benefits of the knowledge they have acquired. This reflective essay examines my learning experiences, especially in three areas – time management, reflection, and public speaking. In the reflection writing, I have used Gibbs` Reflective Cycle model.

Gibbs` Reflective Model

Gibbs` Reflective Cycle is among the most commonly used models in writing reflection papers in academic and medical institutions. The model guides the learner in describing the learning experience through six simple stages – description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action. In the description, the learner writes about the experience itself, describing it in detail. In the next step, the learner describes the feelings that accompanied the learning experience. After describing the feelings, the learner moves to judge whether the experience was a good one or a bad one in the evaluation step. The analysis involves the student making

sense out of the situation. Finally, the learner creates a plan on how to deal with a similar situation in the future.

Time Management

Time management is a critical skill required for effective study for learners. It can be described as a set of behavioural skills necessary for effective organisation of study and coursework (Blair 2019). I thought of organising a small discussion group that could meet regularly and discusses the tenet subjects in the coursework. Group meetings required an elaborate time management plan and study organisation. In the first week of our meetings, we wasted a lot of time through numerous irrelevant activities other than studying. It was in good time that we realised our time-wasting tendencies. With this realisation, I had to draw a study plan or organise the group for efficiency and productivity. In the initial unplanned study sessions, I felt confused and almost gave up on the group because of time wastage. The rest of the group members also felt frustrated and confused by our time mismanagement. One of our colleagues, out of frustration, left the group. This step caused more discouragement to the remaining people. With the increasing discouragement, frustration, and confusion, there was an urgent need to act fast and contain the situation.

In my evaluation, the confusion, frustrations, and discouragement caused by time mismanagement were bad in two aspects. Firstly, the situation could make us lose direction and fail in our exams. Time mismanagement implied disorganised study sessions that could not achieve its goal of enhancing our understanding of the expected core learning outcomes of the course (Blair, 2019). Secondly, the slightest mismanagement of our study time could negatively affect other spheres of our personal lives, especially since we would attempt to adjust and have and create longer times for individual studies, eating into the time for other programs. The effects of time mismanagement during our group study were already weighing heavily on us. I,

therefore, offered to coordinate the group to help us manage time well. In an effort to achieve a coordinated study session, I created a strict time management plan.

A series of strategic actions helped me resolve the issue that was at hand – time mismanagement. Firstly, after acknowledging that several empirical studies link effective time management with academic success, I held a discussion with the group members to draw a plan. In the meeting, I took lead in guiding the group members to draw a study timetable and laid the foundational rules to keep us committed. After collectively drawing the study timetable, we ensured we followed it strictly. Our time management skills greatly improved, and consequently our performance in our coursework. The experience taught me that both group and personal time management skills are necessary for academic success. I also learned that it is important to consider time management strategies first before starting any activity. In future discussion groups, I will ensure that we draw a study timetable first and set in motion the time management strategies at the beginning of the course. Further, I have learned to adhere to strict timeframes in my daily activities.

Public Speaking and Presentation

Public speaking skills are necessary both in academic work and in the professional journey of an individual. Several competent professionals struggle in their profession due to a lack of public speaking skills. Individuals must overcome public speaking anxiety while they are still students. Such an early familiarisation with public speaking skills should increase an individual's competitiveness in the job market after schooling. Professionals are required to constantly improve their communication skills, including public speaking and making presentations. Some of the elements of public speaking that are critical for professionals include rhythm, tone, intonation, verbal register, pronunciation, and articulation (Farhan, 2017).

One of the assignments I was given demanded that I made a verbal presentation in class, though on Microsoft Teams in the presence of the other students. I did my research well and made presentation PowerPoint slides in readiness for speaking before my instructor and the students. My research was elaborate and I had a good mastery of the content I was going to present. However, I lacked the confidence to speak before the students. As the time for my presentation drew near, I increasingly became anxious and had difficulty remembering the content of my presentation. When I felt that I could not go on with the scheduled presentation, I reached out to my instructor and explained my fears. The instructor quite understood, and I was given more time to prepare and ready for the presentation. It took me more than two weeks to be ready to make a presentation before the class.

The entire experience of having to make a public presentation before the class was embarrassing for me. I felt that the entire class members were looking at me in contempt. I felt I had failed and could not succeed in the course. Some of my mates on WhatsApp Group laughed at me. While I kept giggling at their chats, I felt bad inwardly. Accordingly, this situation was a bad experience and I hope this is not a signal of a deeper problem in my career in the future. However, in a thorough assessment of the experience, I realised it was an opportunity for me to learn and adjust in time before I set my foot into the job market.

In dealing with public speaking anxiety, I asked my mates to train me by becoming my small audience as I attempt to speak. The small audience which is made up of familiar faces gave the confidence to speak. A friend of mine kept inviting few more unfamiliar friends to the audience until I was comfortable speaking in front of unfamiliar faces. I will become an effective presenter when my instructor give me an opportunity again in the future. Further, I have dedicated my time to read widely on the subject of public speaking and presentation to ensure that I develop the skills for future use in my career. Besides, I still practice with my friends to ensure I do not experience the same anxiety in the next presentation.

Reflection

According to Veine et al. (2019), reflection enables students to examine their learning experiences to understand the much they have gained, and the much they need to learn. There is an increasing interest in reflection as an element of learning among institutions of higher learning globally. In these institutions, post-assignment reflection, pre-assignment reflection, and reflective journals are gaining momentum as a way of encouraging interdisciplinary learning (Moon, 2005). Course instructors prefer to engage students in reflection since the practice helps the students construct knowledge instead of learning merely abstractly. Reflection in learning helps the students construct knowledge.

Reflection is one of the academic skills that I had mastered before joining the current course. My prior acquisition of the reflective skills proved important for this course since I could easily handle the assignments requiring reflection without straining. These skills became more needful when our class was given an assignment relating to reflection. Several students became stuck with the assignment since they did not have the skills, and the course instructor had not taught us some of the things involved. As one of the few individuals who had prior knowledge of post-assignment reflective writing, I decided to come in and help the rest of my mates. The entire class organised for a remedial discussion hour to listen to my presentation on the subject. My challenge, however, was that I had anxiety standing before many people to make a presentation or public speech.

I invited a few of my classmates and coached them on writing a reflection paper. After the few students were conversant with the process, we divided the members of my WhatsApp Group into a small manageable group of five people. I then assigned the students I had coached to the various groups to coach them too. The scheme worked well, not only for delivering the knowledge but also for time management. At the end of the remedial discussion hour, a

significant number of the students could comfortably do the reflection assignment. The few students who still struggled with the issue were further organised for remedial coaching, after which they could easily write the assignment.

While I felt proud for helping my classmates, I was also sorrowed by my inability to make a presentation before many people. The entire experience revealed my weakness that I had to deal with. To make matter worse, I was already scheduled to make a presentation before the same class in two weeks. While I was apprehensive of proceeding with my presentation, I wanted to ask for more time from my instructor. After learning about the significance of small groups during the remedial discussion coaching, I called a few of my friends to help overcome the anxiety regarding public speaking. They helped me overcome the anxiety. Conducting group discussions for my classmate on reflective writing made me learn more of the skill, especially since I had to read widely before coaching them. The experience also made me learn that there is still a lot for me to learn on reflective writing. I intend to dedicate more time to learn and increase my competency in reflection as I prepare to enter the job market.

Conclusion

Some of my greatest experiences during the semester revolve around time management, public speaking and presentation, and reflective writing. Regarding time management, and study organisation, I have learned that it is important to set a schedule before starting any product, including studies. While I had problems with public speaking and presentation, the course helped to master the skill. Particularly, I learned the art of public speaking when a few friends committed to helping me overcome the anxiety. Further, after having a nasty experience with time mismanagement, I committed myself to learn more time management skills, including drawing a schedule table. On reflective writing, I have committed myself to learn more of the skills as I look forward to joining the job market upon my graduation. I, however, had some level

of knowledge in reflective writing before starting the course. This prior skill helped me assist my classmates in their own areas of weakness, particularly involving post-assignment reflective writing.

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