

Professional Career Development (BMSW4012)

Student Name: Asif Ahmed

Student Number: 2504986

Lecturer: Jonathan Wyatt

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AI Acknowledgement

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I confirm that I have reviewed, edited and adapted the content to reflect my own experiences and understanding. I have not presented AI-generated content as my own work without review and modification.

Introduction

This reflective essay is about my career so far and how my experiences have helped me in my personal and professional development. Reflection is an important process as it allows individuals to learn from their experiences, recognise their strengths and weaknesses and make informed decisions about their future career development (Gibbs, 1988).

My working life has been spent in customer facing roles, including time as a Grocery Staff member and then as a Pizza Chef. More recently I decided to return to education and enrolled on the Diploma in Employability Skills Level 4 at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. I made this decision because I want to improve my employability skills and also to have more opportunities in my career for the future.

This reflection is based on Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988) which is a framework for analysing experiences and identifying actions for the future. In my reflection I will use SWOT Analysis, Myers-Briggs Personality Theory and Holland's Career Theory to support my reflection. I will be using these models to get a better understanding of my skills, personality, strengths and future career potential.

1. Description – What Happened?

My career journey started after I finished my education in high school, college and university. After completing my education, I began working and spent almost fifteen years in the positions of Grocery Staff and Cashier. The job involved serving customers, handling money, organising stock and making sure customers got good service. I learned excellent communication and customer service skills in this position and also learned to be a good team member.

Then I got into another role and worked as a Pizza Chef for about a year after gaining some experience in retail. This job involved preparing food, maintaining hygiene standards, managing time and working efficiently under pressure. The role also involved working with colleagues and communicating to ensure customer satisfaction.

One of the most significant turning points in my career journey was my decision to return to education at the age of 51. I realised the employment market was getting more and more competitive and that I needed to develop new skills to improve my future prospects. So I signed up for the Diploma in Employability Skills Level 4 at University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

It was an important decision for my professional development. It gave me the opportunity to expand my knowledge, acquire new skills and contemplate my future career path.

2. Emotions: What Were You Feeling and Thinking?

Throughout my profession, I experienced a range of emotions. However, as I grew more accustomed to the work and at ease with my clients, I started to like it and take pride in my achievements.

I felt confident working as a cashier since I had to be trustworthy and responsible. Knowing that bosses and consumers trusted me made me feel more self-assured and driven. I particularly enjoyed assisting clients and resolving problems because it made me feel accomplished at the end of each workday.

Since the position of Pizza Chef was different from what I had previously done, I wasn't sure how it would work out when I first started. I quickly adjusted to the new surroundings and relished picking up new abilities. Although the fast-paced nature of the work occasionally put me under pressure, it also made me more robust and adaptive.

It was a mixed bag of feelings to return to school at age 51. However, I was thrilled and inspired since I was making progress toward bettering my future. However, after being away from the formal school system for so long, I wasn't sure if I wanted to return to the realm of study. I questioned if I could handle the pressures of coursework and adjust to academic study.

As I progressed in my studies, my confidence gradually increased. I realised the value of lifelong learning and the notion that growing older shouldn't be a barrier to personal development. This experience has given me greater optimism for my future career opportunities.

3. Assessment: What Worked and What Didn't?

Throughout my professional life, there have been a number of excellent things. The development of effective communication skills was one of the most significant accomplishments. My jobs in retail and catering both required frequent engagement with clients and coworkers, which gave me more self-assurance while speaking to people.

The improvement of teamwork abilities was another beneficial result. I learned the value of collaboration, adaptability, and helping coworkers while working in hectic settings. My capacity to function well in different teams has improved as a result of these experiences.

My choice to go back to school was also a step in the right direction. I showed my dedication to professional growth and self-improvement by enrolling in the Diploma in Employability Skills. My grasp of employability, career planning, and personal development has improved as a result of the training.

But there were difficulties as well. Uncertainty about my future professional path was one of the challenges. Despite gaining useful experience in customer-focused positions, I haven't always been sure of my long-term professional objectives.

Adapting to evolving workplace demands and technological advancements presented another difficulty. Digital skills and ongoing education are becoming more and more necessary for modern work, which can be difficult for people who have been out of school for a long time.

I was able to discover my strengths and weaknesses by using SWOT analysis. Communication, teamwork, and dependability are some of my strong points. But I also acknowledged my shortcomings, such my lack of confidence in my ability to plan a career and my desire to improve my computer abilities. Acknowledging these shortcomings has motivated me to concentrate on my own growth and ongoing development.

4. Analysis: What Does It Signify?

Using a SWOT analysis has given me important insights into my career and personal growth. Strong communication abilities, teamwork, flexibility, and prior customer service experience are some of my strong points. Years of direct consumer interaction in both retail and catering settings have helped to develop these strengths. These transferable abilities are highly valued by employers because they may be used in a variety of industries.

Additionally, the SWOT analysis indicated areas that needed development. Uncertainty about long-term career planning is one of my weaknesses. Despite gaining real-world experience, I haven't always had a clear career path. Furthermore, developing digital skills is crucial for future employment due to the growing significance of technology. I have access to opportunities for professional development, training, and additional education. The labour market is becoming more competitive, and workplace technology is evolving quickly.

My experiences are also explained by the Myers-Briggs Personality Theory. I exhibit traits linked to the ESFJ personality type based on my choices and experiences. People with this personality type frequently take pleasure in lending a hand to others, collaborating with others, and making constructive contributions to their communities (Myers et al., 1998). This explains why I found customer-facing positions fulfilling and why helping customers and collaborating with coworkers made me happy.

My professional preferences are further clarified by Holland's professional Theory. Holland (1997) asserts that people are more likely to feel satisfied with their jobs when their workplace aligns with their personality. I exhibit traits linked to social and enterprising personality types based on my experiences. While enterprising people like communication, leadership, and influencing others, social people enjoy supporting, assisting, and interacting with others.

This hypothesis explains why I liked working in teams and interacting with customers. It also implies that jobs in customer service, training, community service, management, or supervision would be a good fit for my personality and skill set. Overall, these three theories has improved my self-awareness and given me a better grasp of my abilities, areas for improvement, and potential career paths.

5. Conclusion: What Have You Discovered?

In conclusion, I can say that I now have a better knowledge of my professional progress and career path thanks to this contemplation. As I reflect on my experiences, I see how each position has helped me build important transferable abilities like customer service, communication, teamwork, and flexibility.

I was able to reflect on my experiences in an organised manner and pinpoint crucial lessons for my future growth by using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle. Additionally, using Holland's job Theory, Myers-Briggs Personality Theory, and SWOT Analysis gave me important insight into my personality traits, job inclinations, and strengths and limitations.

I've discovered that going back to school was a wise choice that has boosted my self-esteem and enhanced my employability. I now know more clearly what I need to work on and what opportunities I have.

Above all, this contemplation has taught me that professional development and learning are continuous activities. I will be better equipped to meet future professional objectives and adjust to shifting workplace expectations if I keep expanding my knowledge and skill set.

6. Action Plan

Goal	Specific Action	Measurable	Achievable	Relevant	Time-Bound
Improve digital skills	Complete an online IT course	Gain certificate	Yes	Improves employability	Within 3 months
Improve confidence	Participate actively in class discussions	Weekly participation	Yes	Supports professional growth	Ongoing

Explore career options	Research five potential careers	Five careers identified	Yes	Improves career planning	Within 2 months
Complete qualification successfully	Attend classes and complete assignments	Pass all modules	Yes	Supports future employment	End of course
Improve employability	Update CV and apply for jobs	Submit 10 applications	Yes	Supports career progression	Within 6 months

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