

Academic and Employability skills

Reflective Report

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Introduction

Ever Since I was a child, I desired to discover the unknown in everything and understand my life.

The report will include a reflection of my actions during the studies. I will analyse my reaction in different situations, and I will identify the skills required, what I need to improve, and how the course defined them.

People are experiencing learning in different way - four people can be taught the same thing, but they learn differently. The information could be the same, but our capacity to understand and remember is unique. During learning, we tend to combine two experiences: the personal one, internal, with the non-personal, external, and to see the contrast between them (Moon, 2004).

Reflective writing

Reflective writing involves evaluating the situation to see what emotions conduct it and how it could be seen from an external point.

For a better understanding, I choose to apply the *Reflective Cycle* made by Gibbs (1988), which contains six stages. As can be seen in Figure 1, the Gibbs model starts with a description of the situation, followed by the exposure of feelings in three steps: before, during and after the crisis. The first two steps should be explained without analysing them.

The interpretation starts in phase three, with an evaluation to see if the emotions and reactions were positive or negative. Stage four represents an analysis of the situation, finding a better way to respond, and theories to better understand the problem.

Stage five includes the study's conclusion, made of two parts, a literature one combined with a personal one.

The last step includes building a plan that can help in the future, finding the skills needed, the situations where the things learned in the previous steps can be used, and what will be different if a similar problem arises (Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development, 2013).

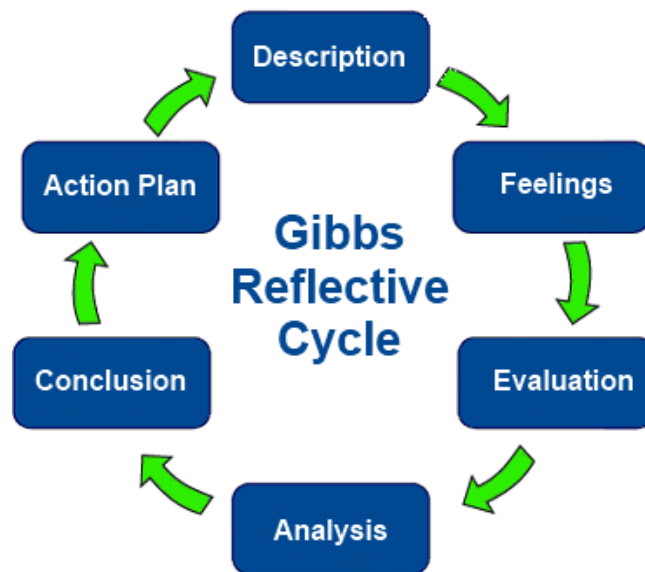


Figure 1 Gibbs Reflective circle (<http://prehospitalresearch.eu/?p=1550>)

Time management

Description

Since I started the Certificate of Higher Education in Skills for the Workplace, I have found it challenging to manage my time to fulfill all my engagements. Being a student and, at the same time, an employee requires good time management skills. During the term, the teacher explained how important it is to know how to manage your time and what method we can apply to be more efficient in our daily routine. He presented The Eisenhower Method, and he wanted to make us understand how easily we can prioritise our daily tasks when you keep track of what you must do and what is more important.

Feelings

At first, it did not seem essential for me to try a method for managing my time; I was confident in myself, and in my way of prioritising the task.

Week by week, I became more nervous and stressed by how close the dates of the assignments are and how short it is my time for study. Probably, most of my colleagues were feeling in the same way at that time.

Also, I was angry because I consider myself a person who knows how to manage her time, and this time everything seems to be wrong. I get frustrated about this and the fact that I should admit how wrong my methods are and that I need to use someone else to improve mine.

I was happy and relieved after I have submitted my first assignment, and I became confident in myself again.

Evaluation

After a few weeks, I tried to review what I have learned during this time. As reading the documents about time management and methods again, I realised that I was not doing an excellent job in prioritising my task. On the other hand, I knew that I could have been worse either. Until studying time management, I had put other things above studies, which I said since I started the course that I will never do. That moment of awareness was the right thing in this situation, making me change my learning and prioritising methods.

Analysis

I started the course by being too confident in myself and believing that I know what time management represents. I consider that I was supposed to pay more attention to what the teacher explained in the first week. It is a fact that people in general and students, in particular, do not know what the best way to manage the time is and tend to wait until the last minute to do their work (Blegur, Wasak, and Souisa, 2019).

Conclusion

According to Chaneski (2017), if you discover how to manage your time properly, you will work "smarter, not harder.". Studying and working simultaneously and learning about time management made me find out the best method of organising my activities to have time to study, work, and free time. I did not proceed in the right manner, and I am aware that is essential to improve my soft skills as prioritising, organising, and scheduling skills.

Action plan

In the future, I plan to organise my time, applying a different method to ensure that all my activities follow a specific schedule. I have started to make lists and make notes for my workouts, planning with keeping in mind when and how much I should allocate for them. Studying and working at the same time makes me occupied, which will help me improve my time management skills by practicing all the methods I have learned until now.

Cover letter writing

Description

Applying for a job has always been complicated for me. Going through the materials for Academic and Employability skills, a title grabs my attention, which sounds like this: Writing a cover letter. Later, our teacher explained what that means and how important it is when you

apply for a job. He described the structure of a cover letter, what should be written and what to avoid, and as all seemed simple I tried to make my own to apply for my dream job.

Feelings

At first, I was a bit confused about the meaning and the necessity of a cover letter. Nobody told me anything about it until that day, and I assume that many people do not truly know what a cover letter means. I am the type of person that likes to do things correctly, and it felt overwhelming to not know about something so important, although very challenging to complete it.

Evaluation

As I applied for several jobs in the past few years, not only once happened to not get any feedback at all from potential employers and I have always questioned myself why that was happening. It was extremely helpful to understand that a cover letter makes a better introduction of your academic and employability work, it helps to picture the content of the CV in a reasonable manner (An Introduction to Cover Letters, 2004). On the other hand, being a modest and shy person makes things hard when you describe what you can do and your best skills.

Analysis

I found it helpful having a description of what the Cover letter represents, I understood that you need to utilize all the methods to present yourself. Our teacher gives us examples for every paragraph and explains how important it is to sign your paper at the final of the letter and finish with "Yours faithfully" or "Yours sincerely" if you know their name.

You need to know your skills and what the company is looking for. The difficult part of writing my cover letter was to expose myself. I always taught that an individual must have experience and hard skills for getting a job until I learned the difference and the importance of soft skills for employers (Isaacs, 2016).

Conclusion

As explained in *The perfect cover letter* (2004) book, if someone wants to succeed, it is necessary to write a cover letter to convince the employer to interview them. I realise now that my failures related to the fact that I omitted to attach a cover letter to my CV.

Action plan

The course helped me understand what I need to do to be a better employee and to get the job wanted. In the future, I intend to write a cover letter for every job. Also, I started to look for

different jobs on websites and think about what skills I need to get that jobs, imagining that I am applying for them.

Referencing

Description

We learned new things during the class, but the problematic part started in week 3 when the teacher explained the referencing. He explained that our work is done with the help of other people who already researched a certain field, and we need to recognise their work by referencing them.

We have an entire book that explains how to do it, and we need to use a specific style named Harvard, which is made to help students avoid plagiarism.

Feelings

Initially, I felt confident after the classes as the teacher tried to show us how to use Harvard style, applying a set of questions about referencing. When I started my first list of references, I was confused about where I found all the information of the paper that I wanted to cite and use in my reference list. I got stressed because I was not sure if I am doing it in the right way.

Evaluation

For reference, it is not enough to mention at the end of your paper the book used; it is also necessary to cite in the text after you paraphrased and summarised the words. It was helpful to have the Referencing Handbook, which made the referencing much easier. However, the hard part occurs when starting the referencing list, and students need to provide the authors' surnames, the year, and the publisher. When I started my assignments, some pieces of information were hard to find, which made me concerned that I do not reference as I should. According to Pandey et al. (2020), if you want to cite in Harvard style, you need to put the author name and the year of publication in brackets after you paraphrase the words.

Analysis

Neville (2010), in *The complete guide to referencing and avoiding plagiarism*, explained all the problems students face with citing and referencing the papers they used. They do not understand why doing it and consider it a waste of time, and they have time management problems. I identify myself in more than one of those problems, and after I started writing my

paper, I have noticed what Neville (2010) and my teacher wanted to say with the importance of avoiding plagiarism and citing the source to reward the author's work. It was challenging for me to write my reports and to understand that if you want to have an original paper, you should research and make sure that credit is given to everyone.

Conclusion

The Academic and Employability module helped me to understand how important it is to avoid plagiarism. I learned different technics for inserting the information in text, giving credit to the people, and making a full list of references using the Harvard style.

Action plan

In the future, I intend to read and use the Referencing Handbook provided by the university to make sure that all my essays are written in a reasonable manner, and the credit for other authors is given using citations and lists of referencing according to the specific style.

Conclusion

I have started the course with the desire to learn more and to be a better employee.

After the first term, I realised that I have achieved more than I expected and also improved my academic writing and communication skills.

I learned how important it is to write a cover letter and to structure a CV, in which to include soft and hard skills in the right way to trigger the employer's interest.

We proposed to make a reflection of our studies, identify our abilities, and build different plans in order to improve our writing and communication skills and therefore become better employees. The Gibbs (1988) model of reflection helped us analyse our experiences during the study.

To conclude, after self-assessing myself, I better understand how crucial it is to reflect on action and reaction. If you want to grow academically, and additionally be a better employee, you have to understand your feelings in certain situations and think about how you can react if you come across similar circumstances again. All these methods of reflection come in your support and develop yourself.

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