

Professional Career Development: A Reflective Essay Using Rolf Reflective Cycle

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Module: Professional Career Development [Module Code] BMSW4012

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Date: [Submission Date] 07/02/2025

Introduction

Professional career development is a crucial aspect of employability, helping individuals develop the skills and knowledge necessary for career success. Throughout my attendance and participation in the Professional Career Development lectures, I have gained valuable insights into key theories and models that enhance career progression. This reflective essay uses Rolfe et al's (2001) reflective cycle structured around the questions "What, so what? and now what?" to explore my learning experiences, the application of these theories, and how they have shaped my professional development.

What?

the lectures covered various models and theories related to career development, employability, and professional skills. The key models discussed included:

1. Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (1984)

2. Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988)
3. Balbin's Team Roles (1981)
4. SMART Goal Setting (Doran, 1981)
5. Schenck's Reflective Practice (1983)
6. Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 1995)
7. Career Anchors (Schein, 1990)
8. The Johari Window (Luft & Ingham, 1955)
9. The STAR Technique for Interviews
10. The Importance of Networking and Personal Branding

During these lectures, I was actively engaged in discussions, case studies, and self-assessment exercises, which helped me understand these models in depth. However, understanding theories is different from applying them, and this essay reflects on how I have implemented (or struggled to implement) these frameworks in my professional development journey.

So What?

This section reflects on how these theories and models have affected my professional development and learning process. I will discuss three key areas: self-awareness, teamwork, and employability skills.

1. Self-Awareness and Reflective Practice

One of the most significant takeaways from the lectures was the importance of self-awareness in career development. The Johari Window (Luft & Ingham, 1955) and Schain's Reflective Practice (1983) made me more conscious of my strengths, weaknesses, and how others perceive me.

For instance, I initially struggled with public speaking, which I identified as a 'Wahiddin area' in my Johari Window. Through Schain's concept of reflection-in-action, I started actively assessing my performance during presentations and adjusting my delivery in real-time. Similarly, by using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988) after each presentation, I evaluated my performance, showed areas for improvement, and developed a more structured approach to public speaking.

However, I sometimes found self-reflection uncomfortable, especially when showing weaknesses. Over time, I realized that constructive self-criticism was essential for growth. Moving forward, I aim to integrate Kolba's Experiential Learning Cycle (1984) more systematically by ensuring that my learning experiences follow a structured process of concrete experience, reflection, conceptualization, and active experimentation.

2. Teamwork and Collaboration

Working effectively in teams is a fundamental skill in any industry. Belbin's Team Roles (1981) was an insightful model that helped me understand different team dynamics and where I fit best. In a group project, I initially assumed a leadership role without considering whether it aligned with my strengths. After completing a Belbin self-assessment, I discovered that my primary roles were Completer-Finisher and Monitor

Evaluator, a€ meaning I was better suited to refining details and analysing decisions rather than leading the team.

Applying this knowledge, I stepped back from the leadership role in a later project and instead focused on reviewing and improving the group's work. This shift led to better teamwork and efficiency. However, I also realized that sometimes I need to step out of my comfort zone and take on dissimilar roles to develop a well-rounded skill set. Therefore, I plan to take on leadership responsibilities in future group projects to enhance my adaptability.

3. Employability and Career Planning

Understanding SMART goal setting (Doran, 1981) significantly improved my ability to set clear, actionable career goals. Initially, my career aspirations were vague” I wanted to be successful in my field. A€ However, after applying SMART criteria, I redefined my goal to ASPSecure a marketing internship within six months by applying to at least five companies per month and improving my portfolio by completing two new projects. A€

Additionally, the STAR Technique (Situation, Task, Action, Result) was extremely helpful in preparing for job interviews. Previously, I struggled to articulate my experiences effectively. By structuring my answers using STAR, I became more confident in presenting my achievements concisely. For instance, in a recent internship interview, I used STAR to explain how I managed a challenging client project, which helped me secure the position.

Moreover, the lectures emphasized the importance of networking and personal branding. Before, I underestimated networking, assuming that job applications were purely merit-based. However, after attending a professional networking event, I realized that making industry connections significantly increases opportunities. As a result, I have actively started expanding my LinkedIn presence and engaging with professionals in my field.

Now What?

While I have made considerable progress in my professional development, there are areas I still need to improve. Based on my reflections, I have found three key actions moving forward:

1. Enhancing My Leadership and Adaptability Skills at” Although I now understand my strengths in teamwork, I need to challenge myself by taking on leadership roles in future projects. I plan to do this by volunteering for leadership positions in group activities and taking part in leadership development workshops.
2. Continuing Self-Reflection and Learning To ensure continuous growth, I will apply Kolba€™™s Experiential Learning Cycle (1984) more consistently. This will involve documenting my experiences, reflecting on lessons learned, and actively experimenting with new strategies.
3. Strengthening My Networking Efforts awhile I have started engaging on LinkedIn, I need to take networking a step further by reaching out to industry professionals for informational interviews and attending more career fairs.

By applying these strategies, I aim to further develop my professional skills and increase my employability. Career development is a lifelong

journey, and the theories learned in this module have provided a sturdy foundation for future growth.

My persona brand

Entrepreneur and Business Consultant:

- Why: exist to help entrepreneurs build businesses that align with their passions while supporting a work-life balance. I value integrity, innovation, and long-term success over short-term wins.
- What: provide business strategy, mentorship, and hands-on consulting to help business owners scale effectively.
- How: focus on a people-first approach, creating tailored solutions that prioritize sustainability and authenticity rather than one-size-fits-all strategies.

Conclusion

Reflecting on my learning using Rolfe's reflective cycle, I have gained valuable insights into self-awareness, teamwork, and employability skills. The application of Kolb's Learning Cycle, Belbin's Team Roles, SMART Goal Setting, and the STAR Technique has significantly contributed to my professional development. While I have made progress in areas like self-reflection and networking, there is still room for growth, particularly in leadership and adaptability. By continuing to apply these models, I am confident that I will enhance my career prospects and personal development.

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