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Task 2: Write an appropriately structured academic report where you reflect on your learning in this module using a recognized model of reflection.

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1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this reflective report is to discuss my learning experience throughout the course of the module by taking into consideration selected topics of my choice.

I was fortunate to have been taught a wide range of academic and employability topics that will be beneficial to me in an academic environment and in an employment setting. Practical personal examples of the application of the selected topics will be given to show my learning experience of the module by considering the knowledge I had of the topics and the learning I undertook outside the classroom. It will also show my understanding of the topics and how it can be useful to me in the future. Furthermore, I will make use of a Kolb's learning experiment reflective model to appraise my understanding of the topics.

2.0 Referencing

Referencing is an important part of academic writing. It is a topic I was keen on understanding during the learning process in class. This was because I struggled in the past to reference the works of others properly. Although, I made effort to understand the topic on my own, the class presented me with the opportunity to have an in-depth understanding of referencing, both theoretically and practically.

2.1 What is referencing

Referencing is a way of acknowledging the sources that were consulted in your work. This could occur in different ways such as in-text referencing – the occasion in the main body of a text where one refers to or quotes the work of others - and by providing a reference list (Open University, 2020).

2.2 Why I should reference

There are several reasons why one should correctly reference. It enables the reader to locate the sources easily. It indicates that the writer has consulted authorities in preparing his work. It helps to give credit to the researcher, and it helps to avoid plagiarism which constitutes an offence (Open University, 2020).

2.3 How should I Reference

We were advised in the module to use the Harvard referencing style when preparing our reflective report. This appears to be the popular referencing style in academic writing. When using Harvard referencing style for in-text citation, only the authors last name, year of publication and the page number is needed (if is directly quoted). For example (Cottrell, 2008) (Morgan, 2016). For full referencing in the referencing list, what is required when referencing a book for instance is to state the authors name, the year of publication, the name of book, the publishing company, and the place of publication. i.e, Cottrell, S. (2010) Skills for Success:

Personal Development and Employability (Palgrave Study Skills) Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan. It is important to note that this format is different when citing journals, websites newspaper articles etc.

I used the Harvard style of referencing for my reflective report. I referenced online articles and gave credit to the authors of the work. For instance, while I was discussing the importance of constant practice to overcome stage freight under the presentation and public speaking topic, I referred to an online resource which I cited in-text (Daniels, 2020). I also included the full citation in the list of reference below. This is important in order recognize the work of others and to avoid plagiarism.

3.0 Presentation and Public Speaking

Presentation and public speaking are important academic and employability skills. They both involve the ability to communicate effectively. Although I have good communication skills, I have noticed over time that I do not put it to good use when making presentations and when speaking in the public. This may be because I do experience stage freight which makes me nervous and stutter while speaking in public. It has a negative impact on the quality of my presentation because it results in me mixing my words which ends up affecting my train of thoughts and the level of my confidence.

I have learnt that one way of overcoming this involves constant practice and knowing the subject well (Daniels, 2020). Although, I do occasionally observe this, I do not usually do it intently. I have come to realize its importance from the teachings in class, especially with regards to my presentation exercise for this module. I have spent considerable amount of time practicing so that I can familiarize myself with my presentation assignment. I sometimes practice this in front of the mirror. It enables me pay proper attention to my tone, gesture, and facial expressions which are all important when presenting or speaking.

Another interesting part of this topic that I learnt, and which I intend to start making use of is making eye contacts and introducing some humour. This is important to keep the audience interested in the presentation. A speaker who uses humour well comes across as more human, more likeable. This puts an audience at ease and makes people more receptive to your ideas

4.0 CV Writing

A CV is a marketing document that gives a summary of a job seekers career history, academic qualifications and explains their future potential. Although this topic was not covered in class, I wanted to understand it properly so that I can apply for jobs in my home country and in the United Kingdom. A CV from my understanding is a document that is aimed at convincing the

employer that the job applicant possesses the requisite qualification, work experience and skills that qualifies him for the job or a chance to move forward in a formal selection process.

According to an online resource, CVs are important because they may constitute the first and probably the only direct means of communication with a potential employer (Day job.com). Therefore, presentation is key. So, it is important that a CV is well written, structured, and designed to give an immediate positive impression to the employer.

When creating a CV there are some important details that it should contain. These are the personal contact details such as: The name, email addresses and contact telephone. In recent times, job applicants now include social media handles i.e., LinkedIn. Furthermore, a CV should have a concise, clear, and brief personal statement of the job applicant. I included this portion in my CV by briefly describing my professional and educational background and my career objectives.

A CV should also contain the education and qualifications by stating the title of the qualification, the dates and year it was obtained and the result. Another important inclusion in a CV, which employers look out and in fact place so much importance on nowadays is the work experience. It shows that the applicant has previous experience in similar or related role and can carry out the role they are applying for. It is required that the CV commences with the most recent work experience by stating the dates and the year of each period. Also key here is the need to outline the key achievements that the applicant made in the previous jobs and not just a narration of the duties that was done.

I came to understand that the hobbies and interest that the applicant has or does is relevant in a CV. Before now, I used to exclude that part because I never thought it was really needed. However, according to a recruitment and career resource – Reed.co.uk - it was noted that inclusion of this in a CV shows that the job applicant does more than just work, it reveals to the employer the abilities of the applicant and what motivates them outside of work (Reed). I reflected this part in my current CV. Some of my hobbies and interests are reading literatures, environmental conservation, art, yoga, and skiing.

Another key addition are the applicant's references. According to another career page it was noted that references show that the person is credible, and the referees can attest to the capabilities, character, work performance and skills of the applicant (Indeed). It is usual for people to include two references. However, it is discovered from my own personal observation that job applicants prefer to use the phrase *References available on request*". While this is included, the references are usually requested when the applicant proceeds to the stage or final stage of the recruitment process.

Although the foregoing are important details that should be reflected in a CV, the presentation and formatting is very important as well. I have come to understand through my personal study on how to effectively present my CV to reflect my relevant skills and experiences. This is important because employers usually look out for them.

The foregoing details have been helpful to me in preparing my CV for job applications in my home country and in the United Kingdom. I have been able to arrange my CV in such a way that it portrays my skills and experiences. For instance, in my recent CV, I listed all the skills that I have acquired over the years which I felt will be relevant to most job applications. These are my ability to use MS office+; being a Team player; Excellent communication skills and conflict management.

5.0 Reflection Model

Reflection may be defined as a purposeful activity that affords one the opportunity to analyse one experiences/ practice/skills to learn and or improve on them. As Watton, Collins and Moon noted, it is the process or activity that provides one the opportunity to have better insights about one's work through a deeper reflection of our experiences. Reflection also helps one to critically review something; build theory from observation and consider the process of our learning.

There are several recognized reflective models i.e., Gibbs reflective cycle (1988), Kolb's experimental Learning cycle (1984), Driscoll's model (1994), Schon model (1991) etc. This report will use the Kolb's reflective model. This model was published in 1984 and it basically involves four stages, namely: concrete learning, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. Kolb's reflective model is referred to as "experiential learning". The basis for this model is our own experience, which is then reviewed, analysed and evaluated systematically (Dennison, 2009).

I would like to state that prior to my understanding of the topics, I had experimented practically how to reference, write a proper CV, and engage in presentations and public speaking. The analysis and evaluation of my experience using Kolb's reflective model shows that there was the need to improve my understanding of these topics if I wanted to be able to reference properly, prepare a proper CV and engage in public speaking and presentations. The teachings in the class coupled with the practical examples assisted me in gaining better insight of the topics. If I am faced with referencing, as I have and will do in this reflective report, I will be able to reference properly. Furthermore, I believe that I now have the confidence to conduct presentations and speak in public.

6.0 Conclusion

This reflective paper has been able to show the academic and employability topics that was taught in this module. This was done with expatiation of the three topics (Referencing, CV writing, presentation, and public speaking) which I found particularly interesting and which I needed to improve on. I used the Kolb's reflection model to appraise my experience and understanding of the topics. I discovered that at the end of the module and after sufficient reading, I had gained a better understanding of how to reference properly, write a good CV and improved on my presentation and public speaking skills: all of which will be beneficial to me in an academic setting and in the employment world.

7.0 Reference

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