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Reflective Report on Academic Skills (June 2024)

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Introduction

Reflection is when an individual applies serious thought or consideration to a certain situation or topic of information (Khan, 2024). It's one of the main differences between humans and animals and it has a great importance in our everyday lives, especially when it comes to academics. The use of reflection can help one to attain multitudes of information in the correct manner and allows you to use your new learnt knowledge to the best of your ability. In this assignment, I will be conducting a reflective report on the following three academic topics; Notetaking, Paraphrasing and Summarising.

A reflective report is a type of academic or professional writing that involves critically analysing and evaluating your own experiences and learning processes in relation to a specific event or subject. Unlike traditional reports that focus purely on facts and findings, a reflective report emphasizes personal insights and self-awareness.

Notetaking

McPherson (2018) "Notetaking is a strategy for making information meaningful. The act of taking notes is more important than the result." This statement was taken from a slideshow produced by Hopkins (2024) in week 2

of the academic year. I believe the above textual observation on notetaking by McPherson is a very simple but effective way for the reader to gain the right understanding when it comes to the topic at hand. Another way of putting it would be; Notetaking is the process of writing down important information/ ideas from a lecture or book to help you understand the material better. It's a great way to stay organized and retain information (Khan, 2024). The importance of notetaking cannot be stressed enough as it is one of the greatest tools when it comes to preserving knowledge. Also, its convenience when coming to reflect strongly emphasises that notetaking and reflection are two concepts that go hand in hand. During our lectures, we focused on different types of notetaking methods; two of the main ones being linear and tabular notation.

Linear notetaking is the traditional method of recording information in a sequential and organized manner, often using bullet points, numbered lists, or sentences. In this approach, notes are written down in the order they are presented, typically from top to bottom on a page. The focus is on capturing the main points, supporting details, and any examples discussed. Tabular notetaking is a method of organizing notes into a table or grid format, where information is arranged in rows and columns. This technique is useful for comparing different pieces of information, organizing data systematically, and making it easier to see the similarities/ differences between various concepts.

After everything I have learnt about the topic we've been discussing, I have concluded that my notetaking should be more detail orientated. I look to develop this skill by putting in the effort when it comes to jotting down key points of a specific piece of information and making sure that I'll be able to grasp the topic as a whole when coming back to my notes.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is when you express someone else's words or ideas in your own words (Khan, 2024). It's like summarising or explaining what someone said but using different words to convey the same meaning. This skill is vital when it comes to academics as it helps to show that you understand the information and can express it in a different way. Laid out below are some of the different paraphrasing methods that we have discussed in class:

Change the Structure

Altering a sentence structure or rearranging the order of ideas is a great way of paraphrasing. For example, "The cat chased the mouse" can be paraphrased as "The mouse was chased by the cat." You could also use different sentence types by converting a simple sentence into a compound or complex sentence. For instance, "She was tired, so she went to bed early" can become "Because she was tired, she went to bed early."

Use Synonyms

Substituting key words with their synonyms can drastically change the layout of a sentence and will enable you to successfully paraphrase. For example, "The movie was amazing" can be paraphrased as "The movie was wonderful." Ensure that the synonym accurately conveys the original meaning, as some words have subtle differences.

Break Up or Combine Sentences

Divide a long sentence into two or more shorter sentences. For example, "Although the weather was bad, we decided to go hiking, and we ended up enjoying the day" can be broken into "The weather was bad, but we decided to go hiking. We ended up enjoying the day." The opposite could also be applied by combining or merging shorter sentences. For instance, "The sky was clear. We decided to have a picnic." can be paraphrased as "Since the sky was clear, we decided to have a picnic."

Change the Point of View

Shifting the perspective is a very useful paraphrasing technique. If the original text is in the first person, change it to the third person, or vice versa. For example, "I believe that exercise is essential" can become "It is believed that exercise is essential."

Reflecting on the importance of paraphrasing skills in academic writing, I recognize that mastering this skill is crucial for both improving the quality of my work and maintaining academic integrity. As I move forward, I plan to implement these skills thoughtfully and strategically in my writing to ensure that I can present ideas clearly and credibly. I understand that paraphrasing goes beyond merely rewording someone else's ideas—it requires a deep comprehension of the material. To effectively paraphrase, I need to fully grasp the meaning of the original text, which will sharpen my understanding of the subject. This type of engagement with the content will lead to a more insightful analysis in my academic work. In future assignments, I will actively use

paraphrasing as a tool to combine information from various sources. Rather than relying on direct quotes, I will paraphrase to convey ideas in my own words, which will allow me to tailor the information to fit the context of my argument. This will also help me to demonstrate my ability to critically engage with the material and present it in a way that supports my thesis or research questions. I plan to continually improve my paraphrasing skills by practicing regularly. I will review feedback from my instructors on how I incorporate paraphrasing and use it to refine my technique. Additionally, I will explore different methods of paraphrasing, such as altering sentence structure, using synonyms, and breaking down complex ideas into simpler terms.

In summary, implementing paraphrasing skills in my academic writing will not only enhance the quality of my work but also deepen my understanding of the material. As I move forward, I am committed to applying these skills thoughtfully, ensuring that I maintain academic integrity while clearly and effectively communicating my ideas.

Summarising

In week 7 of the academic year, the main topic was to do with summarising. Summarising is when you present a brief overview of a piece of text/ information. It's like capturing the most important parts and producing it in a shorter form helping the reader to understand the key ideas without going through all the details (Khan, 2024). Summarising is important for several key reasons, particularly in academic and professional contexts. It involves condensing information into shorter versions, emphasising the main points and omitting unnecessary details.

It enhances your understanding, clarifies main Ideas and forces you to extract the essential points of a text, which deepens your understanding of the material. By focusing on the main points, you can better grasp the overall

message or argument. It also Improves information retention as it can help aid your memory: When you summarize information, you actively engage with the content, making it easier to remember. The process of summarizing helps preserve the material in your mind, making it more likely that you'll recall it later. Like paraphrasing, summarizing helps you present information in your own words, reducing the risk of plagiarism. It also allows you to incorporate other people's ideas into your work while making your own original contributions without jeopardizing your academic integrity.

In summary, using summarizing will improve my efficiency and communication skills across various areas of life. By regularly practicing and applying summarizing techniques, I will be better equipped to manage information, make informed decisions, and achieve academic, professional, and personal goals.

Conclusion

Academic skills are essential because they help you succeed in your studies by improving your ability to understand and analyse information effectively. These skills include Notetaking, Researching, Summarising, Referencing, Paraphrasing and Reflection. It is a preparation for future academic and professional endeavours. A mastery of academic skills also encourages independence and self-discipline, allowing individuals to tackle complex tasks with confidence. Furthermore, these skills are greatly important to the workplace, where the ability to analyse information and solve problems is highly valued, making them crucial for long-term success.

In conclusion, academic skills are vital tools that empower individuals to navigate their educational journeys with the utmost competence. By developing strong academic skills, such as critical thinking, effective communication, and time management, students not only enhance their learning experiences but also prepare themselves for the challenges of the modern workplace. These skills enable individuals to approach problems with a structured mindset and manage their responsibilities efficiently. Ultimately, the

cultivation of academic skills is key to achieving success in almost all aspects of life.