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ASSIGNMENT: ACADEMIC AND EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

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ACADEMIC AND EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

REFLECTIVE REPORT

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REFLECTIVE REPORT

Introduction

Reflective writing refers to an act in which the student adds meaning to his/her reflection by describing a real or imaginary event, a thought, and a memory. (Jasper, 2013). On the other hand, Brookfield (1987) thinks that reflections involve what other people said or did, what you have read, what you are thinking, and what has changed in a certain period. According to the Center of Learning (2014), reflective writing "supports active learning and explores situations from different perspectives and allows you to gain skills to make progress personally and professionally". Therefore, this reflective report adopts Driscoll's What Model (1994) where I will explain what has so far happened in my school journey, reflection about my experiences at the University of Wales Saint David. Finally, I will also show the action I will take after the reflection.

Driscoll's What Model (1994)

Driscoll's What Model lays down three simple questions of what? So what? And now what? That I will use to describe my experiences, analyze them, and finally give possible steps to be taken regarding the reflection. I will reflect on the major topics covered by the "Academic and employability skills" module as well as a brief reflection on the online learning experience.

What?

I joined the University of Wales Saint David London Campus at the start of this year 2020 and I was enrolled privately to undertake a Certificate in Higher Education: Health and Social Care. I joined this course willingly to acquire sufficient knowledge about health and social care. This is because my goal is to become a nurse in the future and this course will be a stepping stone for me to achieve my goal.

After examining the modules provided by this course including; effective teamwork and communication, Academic & employability skills, digital skills & research methods and Professional Career Development, I was encouraged to take on the course because I needed these skills for my career especially team working, digital skills, employability skills, and professional career development.

At the start, teachers asked us to introduce each and know each, stating that it is important to know each and we should "feel at home". The teachers started by telling us their expectations from students and told us what to expect in the course as we get along.

Teachers asked us to always prepare for school in time and encourage us that this course is very easy and therefore "no need to panic". The expectations included; being considerate and to have respect for teachers and each other, handing in assignments in time to avoid missing out on

marks and also advised all students to always guide each other to follow school rules and regulations.

The Academic and Employability skills teacher introduced the following topics that the module will cover in semester one that I have so far finished successfully with good marks.

- ✓ Summarizing
- ✓ Paraphrasing
- ✓ Academic writing
- ✓ Employability skills
- ✓ Referencing
- ✓ Reflection on employability skills and online learning experience

So what?

Boggs (2016) suggests that it is important for people around you to understand your experiences, thoughts, feelings, and behavior. This can only be possible through a personal reflection that other people can refer to. According to the Center of Learning (2014), reflecting on the topics covered helps to demonstrate what a student has learned and the gaps between the learning processes.

Studying at the University of Wales Saint David London campus has offered a great opportunity to look at life differently. On my first day at school, I felt overwhelmed and very excited to study in a new environment as it was a great adventure for me without family.

At the start, I felt some fear and did not speak for about an hour but as time went by, I started talking to a few students and as I write this report, I am happy to report that I got used to interacting with students and I am friends with most of them. Honestly, making friends with some of them has been a great opportunity because we discuss and help each other in completing assignments.

I felt so responsible at school because I tried to manage my time well, attend as many lectures as I could and this made me feel responsible and organized. However, the outbreak of the COVID 19 pandemic led to a decline in my efforts to study because schools were closed and therefore we had to study online, honestly, I did not welcome this idea and I felt very hesitant.

As the teachers introduced the modules of the course, I felt so happy that I am going to acquire the knowledge and skills I need for my career in just a single course. However, my expectations fell as the teacher said that "this is just the beginning", the teacher explained that there is a long way to go as this course is just a foundation. Regardless, I am willing to do whatever it takes to chase my goal of becoming a nurse.

Reflection about topics covered

Academic writing

Academic writing involves collecting evidence to back up the writing that should be clear, focused, and structured. (Hayot, E., 2014). However, my teacher of this topic strongly emphasized that the purpose of academics is to enable the student to understand and therefore no need to use 'complicated' vocabulary.

Before this topic, I had never written an assignment that required me to gather evidence to back up my ideas. I feel so stressed about academic writing because it requires me to do a lot of reading and I have to produce evidence to support my ideas and arguments.

I felt happy about this topic because I was able to understand the types of persons used in writing reports and essays for example "first-person" and "second person". However, these two still confuse me, especially while writing reports because sometimes I find it difficult to avoid "the first person" especially when am referring to myself.

With academic writing, I have learned how to structure sentences with correct punctuations and conjunctions especially in essays and report writing while putting down ideas and arguments depending on the topic at hand whether persuasive, formal, or objective. In addition to sentence structure, I have also learned other skills like argument essays, summarizing, critical thinking, quoting, and paraphrasing.

Summarizing

Before joining the University, I thought summarizing was about making information shorter than the original document. I was surprised to know that I have been thinking wrongly all this long because the teacher explained that summary writing is about picking out the main ideas and points from a document, keeping in mind the relevance of those ideas. Similarly, Buckley (2004) defines summarizing as a method of writing involving reduction of words to "one-third or one-quarter of the original size" maintaining the main ideas and without changing the meaning.

I started taking summary writing seriously because my teacher explained that summarizing is a skill that I will need throughout my career, either at school or in the workplace. I feel very happy that I learned how to summarize because it has improved my reading skills. After all, I learned how to main ideas while reading.

I have also learned that in summary writing, there's no need to make judgments about what the original document is about, but it simply requires one to pick main ideas from the document and report on them. (Buckley, 2004).

I realized I know how to summarize by the way I put ideas and main points in PowerPoint presentations because they are usually brief and concise.

In general, I can summarize any information without difficulties building on the knowledge acquired in my prior education and knowledge provided by this module.

Paraphrasing

Oxford dictionary (2018) defines paraphrasing as a way of "expressing the meaning of something written or spoken, using different words to achieve more clarity". I knew how to change words and rearranging sentences but I did not know it was called "paraphrasing". I am happy that this module made me understand this.

I am also happy to report that in addition to paraphrasing, I learned a concept of "citing" which I had never heard of. I was happy to learn that "citing" means "showing who said or wrote what you have paraphrased and when he said or wrote". The teacher told us that it is important because ideas and arguments have to be backed up with evidence. For example, citing means to refer to written information through books, passages, authors to obtain justification for arguments or statements. (Merriam-Webster, 2019).

In the same lecture, the teacher taught us about another concept "quoting" which she said goes hand in with "paraphrasing" in most cases. The teacher said that "quoting" is used in cases where the writer using the author's exact words. I learned that it is fine for me to 'quote' and 'paraphrase' in the same sentence or paragraph something that has improved my grammar and vocabulary.

Referencing

When it came to referencing, I was very surprised. I was surprised by the fact that I had to show where I get whatever I talk about. I keep wondering why? "Why do I have to show where I got arguments from"? To answer this, question, the teacher explained that it is important to show credit to authors who have to provide information in the journals, books, or any other publication.

The teacher talked about referencing styles but her focus was on American Psychological Association (APA) Harvard referencing style which she said that "is the recommended style for the university". However, I just adapted to this format but up to now, I do not know why this format is most used and recommended.

I learned the concept of 'in-text referencing' whereby the source of information is put within the text instead of the reference list. However, I also learned that it is important to create a reference list at the end of the document and include all sources used in the gathering of information.

Overall, this topic has helped me to improve my research and digital skills by accessing credible information and evaluating sources especially during the research papers that require me to access a variety of information to obtain evidence.

Reflection about the online learning experience

At the start, I was happy about online learning because I was not spending any money on semesters of transport to school and other costs. I was also happy that the outbreak of the COVID 19 pandemic did not stop us from studying. However, as time went by, I started developing negative feelings about online learning.

First of all, I am a student who likes face to face interaction to understand better whatever is being communicated. I started missing school especially the explanations given by teachers in my presence and also my friends at school with whom I used to discuss some topics.

With online learning, I felt disappointed because I lost the opportunity to interact especially due to breaking down related to the network. I felt so bad whenever the internet could get too slow or sometimes disappear in the middle of the lesson and did not pick the information.

I started losing interest in online learning at some point because I felt left out. I was very confused about how it works because I had never used an online learning platform before. Also, online learning is not fun compared to attending physicians in a classroom. This is because it seems to be teacher-driven and it often gets very boring making learning hard.

I find studying at home very hard for me because I have a family and in most cases, I get easily distracted by my children and dogs barking around my home. Therefore online learning experience has not been a good one for me.

Reflection on Employability skills

Yorke (2004) defined Employability skills to be a combination of skills, talents, achievements, and attitudes that a graduate has which are more likely to make him or her employed. This set of skills should benefit both the student and the organization for which the student intends to work. (Page 21)

Communication skills were developed through active participation in class and during presentations where the teacher emphasized proper use of verbal and non-verbal communication since “the way we speak, stand, facial expressions communicate a lot.”

I have gained teamwork skills through this course especially from the module “effective teamwork and communication” because the module introduced theories of teamwork and we practically worked in groups to complete assignments which improved my teamwork skills.

The opportunity to study at the University of Wales Saint David has helped me to meet different students from many countries, with different languages and cultures. Fortunately, I communicate with them well, study with them, and have made many friends from my classmates. This has helped to improve my Interpersonal skills.

Learning online has made me appreciate the use of computers and I am now familiar with the computer basics because I use computers to read, research, to study, and to answer exams which have improved on computer skills.

Now what?

Now that online learning has become the only option due to the outbreak of COVID 19, I plan to download all the reading material about all modules to ensure that I try learning by myself at home or any other quiet place.

When school finally opens fully, I plan on doing more work from school including reading more books from the library, concentrating in class, more research, and taking extra lessons to acquire better marks than those obtained in semester 1.

I also plan to engage one on one with my teachers about the modules/topics that I did not fully understand because I realized these topics are the foundation for me to acquire very good academic and employability skills.

Conclusion

So far, the University has tried its best to equip all students with knowledge obtained from undertaking this course because I can proudly report that my academic skills and employability skills have improved. I have so far acquired academic skills; like essay writing, report writing, presentation skills, independent learning through online, note-taking, research skills, critical thinking, and above all, I have acquired a lot of knowledge. On the other hand, I have been able to improve my employability skills like; teamwork, communication, problem-solving, computer skills, time management, and leadership skills. I am very confident that by the end of semester 2, I will have moved halfway into acquiring my academic goals.

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