

Course: CERT HE Skills for the Workplace,

Health & Social Care

Module: Academic and Employability Skills

BMSW4001_LON

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`My reflections on selected topics covered in the module

Academic and Employability skills`

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1. Introduction

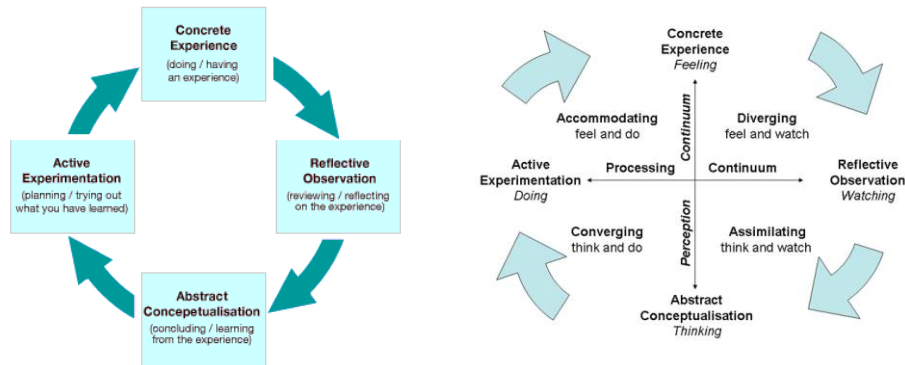
This report discusses my personal goals and professional aspirations to become a psychologist, reflecting on my personal experience since I entered the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, London campus, and enrolled as a student of the Cert HE Skills for the Workplace Health & Social Care. In this report, I will describe and analyse my past experiences and what I learned in this first period of my studies in the Academic and Employability skills module. Understanding how to apply what I learned in this module helped me to improve not only my academic writing, but also transferable skills such as interpersonal communication and the ability to understand people, intelligence and emotional management, time management, reflection and critical analysis. All of these skills will help me to achieve the desired career in Psychology for Social Work (National Careers Service, 2021), and to perform professional duties.

Since I arrived in London three years ago, I have been aiming to improve all of those professional abilities mentioned above, as well as my English language skills. After learning about USWTD's Health & Social Care course, I understood that this could be the first step towards achieving all these personal goals. So, in the face of the great challenge of expressing myself and writing an academic report in English, I am very excited, confident and optimistic about my progress, and also feel more able to develop the ability to learn the necessary professional skills.

2. My reflections on selected topics covered in the module Academic and Employability skills

Regarding the Academic and Employability skills module, I can state that there were some particularly important topics to me: Time Management and Organising Study, Academic Writing, Referencing, and Public Speech. When looking back on these, I realised that I needed to follow a recognised model of reflection, to give my thoughts some order. According to Brush (2020), this model, also known as the framework for reflection, encourages a structured process to guide the act of reflection. "Reflection is about students becoming aware of their own thought processes and being able to make them transparent to others, allowing assessment of the why and how of learning, and what needs to be done as a result".

The model proposed by Kolb (1984), for example, assessing learning styles across multiple courses, has been analysed by several authors. As shown in McLeod (2017), "Kolb's experimental learning theory works on two levels: a four stage cycle of learning and four separate learning styles." Effective learning is achieved when, through a cycle of stages, the individual makes progress.



Therefore, the construction of this report is inspired by Kolb's method, showing how I followed my own progress.

2.1 Time management and organising my study

When I thought about time management, it was impossible not to remember what I consider important in my life and the goals I would like to achieve. After learning about time management and organising studies in this course, I realised that this is not just a mandatory approach in relation to writing my academic essays but also a way to organise my personal life in general as well (Entrepreneur Handbook, 2013). I was thus able to apply the lessons learned.

Good time management skills allowed me to be more productive in each activity outside class, making all these activities more centred, focused and time-framed, and, in this way, committing to the deadlines with no hassle or stress. I have been applying the Smart Goals technique (Patel, 2020) in order to achieve my next goals.

My reflections followed Kolb's model, as shown in McLeod (2017), as follows. In Kolb's reflective observation stage, I could review the relevant literature through independent study. In the abstract conceptualisation stage, I could analyse the key concepts and adjust them to make them relevant to my personal presentation and report. In the same way, I started to apply them to my own life. It helped me to be more productive, as I separated the activities into *Times of the day What and When*, as suggested in Entrepreneur Handbook (2018). To make it work, in Kolb's active experimentation stage, I have followed my own plan related to the time to be

spent on each activity throughout the week. Thus, I could develop all of the activities that I needed and still be ahead of time with schedules. I came to understand that Time Management is the most appropriate tool for better control over my life, tasks and responsibilities.

2.2 Academic writing

Gilles Deleuze (1997, p.11) states that writing is always a case of becoming, always unfinished, always in the process of being done. It was generally known to me that academic writing in higher education causes changes in students' lives, on the personal, cognitive, professional, effective, cultural and social levels, as it allows the development of new skills for a professional qualification, making them more prepared for the workplace and academic life in general. Naturally, all students build on their previous experience of reading and writing, but also learn to apply new methodologies and follow new conventions in their new academic context, understanding clause and sentence structure, using appropriate language for writing. Their work becomes a negotiation between their own view of what formal writing should be and what is required for a very specific readership (Kaufhold, 2015). This was definitely true in my case, as my previous education was a) in Brazil (and therefore conducted in Portuguese), and b) of a technical or commercial nature – very different from Anglophone conventions and medical training.

Moreover, I came to realise that we can apply some of the skills required in academic writing not just in the academic domain, but also in the work environment. Thinking and critical analysis are transferable skills that aid understanding of individual differences and challenges, improving the ability to solve problems and facilitating relationships with other professionals and patients or clients. I could reflect on my learning, as shown in McLeod (2017) by experimenting with the first stage of concrete experience following Kolb's model, starting to write this report in formal English language. This involved understanding what a reflective report is, the way I could write it, and what the topics I would write about would be, followed by questioning and having discussions with my instructor and reading articles that could help me to improve my academic writing skill. Then, in Kolb's reflective observation stage – or, to be more precise, following a combination of Diverging and Assimilating learning styles – I could submit the first ideas about this same report to my instructor, receive feedback and explanations, review the literature in case to improve what I had written and, finally, adjust the final ideas so that I could write what I would about my experience with this topic.

2.3 Referencing

From my own experience at the university, I came to see that academic writing is a technique that we can apply to any study. Moreover, when writing any academic work using references, we can contribute to the construction of academic knowledge, based on all of the past references that acts as a way to support our critical thoughts: thereby, “academic writing builds on previous research” (University of New England, n.d.). The use of references in the construction of academic writing does not make us lose the originality of the theme, and does not make us write in a shallow way. The truth is that references should be used as a way to find a trustworthy point that leads us to confront ideas, thoughts and science, consequentially building a dialogue that will provide the construction of new knowledge and theories (Smith, 2008).

This active experience, as Kolb calls this stage (McLeod, 2017), that I could acquire through the academic search for references to write this report, and also the application of technique by citing those sources according to a fixed convention, in this case, Harvard style (Referencing Handbook Harvard), made me reflect on the importance of reference for academic writing. We should refer to the work of others in almost all assignments, always explicitly acknowledging those sources such as: “an in-text reference in the body of your assignment and an item in the list of references at the end of your work”, and then to avoid plagiarism (University of New England, n.d.).

On a more personal level, learning to apply the Harvard style requires mental discipline and attention to detail, working according to set formulae – and the mindset that this develops will make me a more competent and flexible professional, able to adapt to the APA style that most psychologists use.

2.4 Public speech

The lessons and videos presented in class were very important to me when talking about public speech. It gave me a solid base that helped me to understand that, when presenting an idea to an audience, it needs to be delivered in a clear way, so that the audience would understand what message I want to deliver. However, the act of talking to a live audience makes me feel a bit nervous. As English is not my mother tongue, the stress that may be caused by speaking in public is greater than it would normally be, but not a serious impediment.

When preparing my speech, I needed to organise the thoughts that I wanted to present to the public, because I was talking about myself and what expectations I have about the ongoing

course. I created an introduction to the theme, explanation and conclusion. However, while preparing the presentation, it became clear to me that having all of the information written down in chronological order is also very important.

After this first experience of talking to the public, I could understand that preparation is absolutely essential, especially when we do not have the opportunity or the confidence to improvise. We also need to be very clear, so that everyone can understand. We need to employ the techniques of time management here too, because our delivery must be concise.

In this experience, I could actually complete my effective learning, according to the four stages of Kolb's cycle, as explained by McLeod (2017). In this way, now I can understand that the more I can speak in public, the more I will get used to this type of situation. Moreover, the more relaxed I become in front of an audience, the better my presentation will be delivered.

3. Conclusion

As explained in this report, my intention is to become a psychologist, aiming to help people with their mental health issues and their social condition. The Academic and Employability Skills module was a milestone in preparation for my future career, as it gave me a crucial understanding of different topics that helped me to increase my understanding of various aspects of communication. For example, Public Speech helped me to better communicate with my colleagues and also boosted my confidence regarding speaking in public. Academic writing showed me that I can be analytical and argumentative when expressing my thoughts, writing with confidence, and speaking for myself. Time management was a great tool that allowed me to better develop my studies, in a more organised and focused way. With all of these tools, I feel sure that I can produce excellent work at UWSTD, demonstrating the knowledge that is mandatory here, and later in my career.

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