

Component 1: Reflection

This piece of reflective writing is about my first job interview after leaving college and is based on the model of the Gibbs' Reflective Cycle. This involves six stages; description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and action plan. The Gibbs' reflective cycle allows me to look back upon my experience and reflect on all aspects of what I did well or not as well and reflect on what I would do differently next time using the six stages.

My most vivid memory of my very first job interview was going to bed the night before, I was filled with fear along with excitement and confusion. That is the first stage of my reflection. Gibbs states that by reflecting on your learning experiences, it allows you to better your performance as it is happening, as well as improving it for the future. In my opinion, you have to experience a situation, such as a job interview in order to learn and to build up your confidence to experience it again.

This was my first ever experience of going out into the world of work so I wanted to make a good impression, I wore my smartest clothes, had practiced in front of my mirror in my bedroom countless times and arrived promptly, in fact, intentionally twenty minutes early to try to make the right impression of keenness. Nevertheless, I began to worry and question myself 'Was I too early?' and 'Am I in the right place?' 'How are the other candidates feeling?'

Graham Gibbs, a professor at the University of Oxford, argued: "It is not enough just to do, and neither is it enough just to think. Nor is it enough simply to do and think. Learning from experience must involve linking the doing and the thinking."

On arriving through the colossal steel gates that still seemed as big as when I was at school, I felt like it was my first day back at school all over again and a huge wave of fear came over me..

I composed myself in the echo of the corridor for a few moments whilst I contemplated walking into the main hall. I quickly noticed that I was not alone, there was at least twelve other candidates all waiting in the intimidation, considerably immense school hall.

I became more apprehensive and my heart began to beat faster and faster as I looked around me. My newfound confidence was beginning to collapse. As I glanced over, there was a vacant chair in the far end of the hall. I rushed over to take a seat. This made me think of Gibbs' Theory concerning feelings, by this time; I had experienced a range of feelings raging from fear, excitement, confusion and confidence.

Whilst sitting down in the hall, I skimmed around the hall to peek at the other candidates, a kind looking woman caught my eye, and she gave me an enormous smile, which immediately made me feel calm, welcome and relaxed. After what seemed like an eternity, my name was called and I was escorted to a bright, colourful classroom. I quickly noticed that this active and gleeful classroom, which was focussed on children and their learning, was where I was meant to be, somewhere which would give me a purpose. I must say that this made me feel far more confident than I had ever imagined and I was ready for whatever questions were to be thrown at me. I will never forget that feeling of belonging.

I had researched the school very well; in fact, I had attended the school myself, many years previously. This gave me some knowledge of the logistics and the ethos of the school. A new head teacher who welcomed me with a handshake and a kind smile was interviewing me. The questioning was quite intensive and at moments, I felt that I was completely out of my depth. Nevertheless, I felt that I was well prepared and answered the questions to the best of my ability. On the question of my greatest strength, I confidently explained about my passion for supporting children with severe and complex needs and even though I was at the very first stage of the employment ladder, I was very keen to learn and know more about additional learning needs. I understood that it would be challenging but I was eager and willing to take that challenge on.

I gave a brief overview of myself, which included all relevant information that the interviewer required i.e. my age, education, qualifications, skills and abilities. I felt that I gave sufficient answers to the questions that I was asked,

but upon reflection, if I ever have another job interview, I will need to answer more promptly and with more confidence.

Through reflecting on this previous experience, I am able to pull out the positive and negative aspects of the interview, which I feel would help me in the future to perform better.

The safe environment was carried through the full interview and the interview concluded with me being asked if I had any questions, comments or concerns which I would like to discuss. Looking back, my major weakness here was not asking any questions.

I believe that I had four major strengths during that interview, those were, a quietly confident attitude, being a presentable person, my enthusiasm for working at a school and spending time nurturing and caring for children, my ability to communicate effectively and my eagerness to learn.

I always knew that I was a courageous person but I did not know that I was able to demonstrate that to a high level at a professional setting. I was able to demonstrate confidence of a new level when answering the questions. I was also able to look the interviewing right in the eye whilst talking which I really feel impacted upon this experience.

I consider myself to be a good communicator although shy on occasions, but at this interview I feel that I was able to express myself clearly and efficiently. Nevertheless, due to my maturity, this is definitely a factor that I have improved on since this interview.

A good number of potential employees believe that their academic experience can give them access to job opportunities. However, I believe that the personal appearance of potential employee can indicate whether they are inspired enough to take the job. Being a presentable person helped me make a good appeal to the interviewer. I wore office attire and assumed a good posture.

I remember the day as if it were yesterday and all of those feeling come flooding back to me when I think about that job interview. This interview was very enlightening and a learning experience for me. The interview gave me new perspectives in my life, which I felt, gave me the opportunity to learn so much from. It gave me courage to face challenges that I never thought I was capable of and face life in a positive way.

The key point that I got from this interview is that it will be with me for the rest of my life, which is positive, take the challenges heads on, accept the reality and courageously face adversities. Also, it showed me all the bad times in life always passes and they do not remain constant in life. I will definitely incorporate these lesson that I have learned from this experience.

After twenty-four years of working at the same job, the first job that I had ever applied for, I still get nervous of how I felt on that day, how I felt that night before, the morning before I left and how I would feel attending another job interview.

In fact, I have a job interview coming up very soon and I will be using this experience to help me in preparing for that interview. I learnt a lot on that day and will be using the skills that I learnt on how to deal with the situation in a strong and confident manner. Reflecting back upon this interview and breaking down the five stages will help me to not just prepare for the job interview but to actually undertake the interview. Reflection is key to moving forward.

From personal experience, I can admit that I do not retain the greatest interview skills - I shake uncontrollably, I demonstrate high anxiety levels, and I find it challenging to think on the spot. For me, the questions, themselves, do not represent the stressor, but rather, the stress comes from knowing that the individual in front of me retains the ability to control my future career.

I broke down the process into the five stages as Gibbs states, analysing the process as a whole and identifying each step and applying it to future experiences.

Overall, the interview was quite challenging, but a successful one and I got the job. By combining some of the key strengths (such as communication, courage, good appearance, and emotional intelligence), I was able to provide a feedback that showed the interviewer the connection between my interests as well as skills and the job advertised by the school.