

ACE

Assignment no 2

Academic Report

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1. Introduction

“Education is the most powerful weapon that you can use to change the world!” Nelson Mandela (July 16, 2003)

It is generally accepted that Higher Education study has the potential to power careers and further professional aspirations and goals and improve the overall wellbeing of the individual. Developing Academic skills can fulfil a broad spectrum of employment requirements and increases potential for a successful career benefiting both the employer and the employee.

According to the US Vista University case study and *The Importance of Higher Education in the 21st Century*, (November 2019), it has been determined that a proportion of 84 % of the Americans agree with the fact that Higher Education is very important; while an estimated 62% percent of the Americans feel that attending a form of Higher Education would have a positive impact on the quality of their lives, if they were to attend a form of HE study.

In the present report I am looking to discuss the importance of Higher Education and highlight the Academic Skills that can actively contribute to shaping my personal and professional success and improve my employability for the future. I will also look to explain how applying academic principles to my everyday life will improve my personal goals and my professional aspirations.

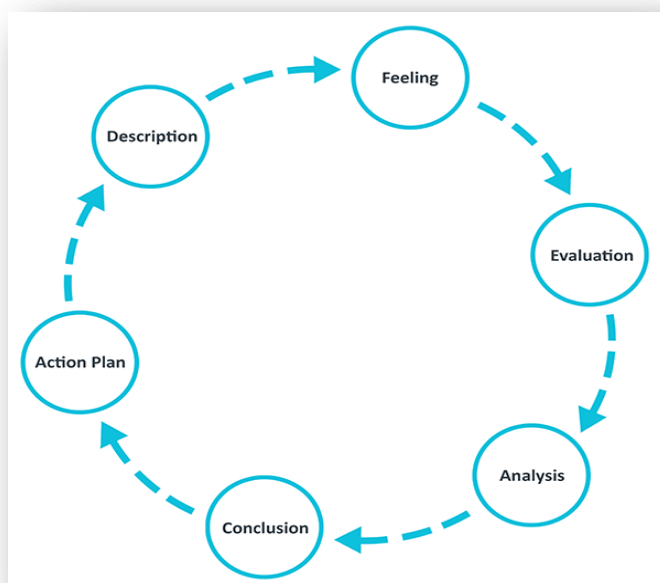
2. Reflective Writing-Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1988)

Reflective writing is in essence an analytical practice personalised to the writer and with view to a situation, event or a thought. Written generally in the first person, the author of the reflective writing piece uses analysis to extract lessons and evaluate personal feelings on the events, thoughts or actions. In order to get value from the events analysed the author must look past at an event by remaining critical to the facts analysed and emotionally detached in order to understand and assess the situation correctly and extract the correct learnings. The reflection process is guided by using self-asking questions about the event (“what happened”), and promotes introspection (“what could I have done differently”), examination of feelings (“why did I do that”) and realisation (“how could I have done this differently”) to conclusion (“how could I have done better”). Reflective writing also teaches preparing an action plan for a future similar event or situation and use critical thinking in designing the outcome. There are different types of reflective models such as Gibbs and Kolb that can be applied to reflective writing and thinking processes with the aim to learn from experience.

Gibbs' reflection cycle is a logical concept of thinking using 6 elements to demonstrate the thought process leading to embody the concept of reflective writing. Although every situation is unique, Gibbs urges to use analysis and deep reflection over a situation with the potential of constantly refining the answers, as time changes the way we look at past experience and enhances perspectives.

Basically, to give expression to the cycle, Gibbs uses 6 elements as presented below:

- **Description**/the event, action or situation
- **Feelings**/thoughts and feeling about the event
- **Evaluation**/positive or negative outcome of the situation
- **Analysis**/to help make sense of the situation
- **Conclusion**/lessons drawn, what could have been done differently
- **Action plan**/future response in a similar situation, changes to influence the situation



Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

Reflective writing is a concept that can help me to understand better my personal progress and identify gaps in my own thought processes and actions. By using reflective thinking and applying them to me personal experience I will be able to improve the way I live, study and work.

Keeping a log for my academic study will help me focus on the areas that tend to be lacking in my performance and will allow me to process reflective analysis in relation to my study. By taking notes and recording lessons and feedback from my study I can reflect on my understanding and the progress that I made in class since the course started, up to the present day.

By using Gibbs reflective cycle concept when reading the notes of the log helps me in making the connection to linking theory to facts, and class learning theory to practice.

3. Topics

Looking back at the course of my career, I generally find that I base my skills to learning from experience and not so much from attending a form of specific education related to my work. The knowledge gained through Higher Education study will help me improve the areas, skills and concepts central to my work that I identified to prove valuable to me in further achieving professionally, as listed below:

- Time management
- Public speaking and presentation
- Cover letter
- CV writing

Applying analysis and using academic principles to improve my personal learning experience will bring me a step closer to finding the correct answers to eliminating constraints in my professional activity and personal life and lift any self-imposed barriers blocking my professional progression and personal development.

3.1. Time Management

Higher Education learning teaches the use of Academic tools to achieve time management.

Academic time management uses a range of tools to maximise time and enhance productivity, such as for instance:

- Calendars and planners
- SWOT analysis

- The Pareto principle, otherwise known as 80 20 rule

Calendars can be classed perhaps one of the most basic academic tools that can be used to organise activities. Calendars are essential to increase productivity and they are easy to utilise. Daily/weekly/monthly calendars are an effective way to organise routine tasks and keep on top of schedules.

SWOT Analysis is another effective planning solution that helps in identifying and transforming weaknesses into strengths by using critical thinking and objective self-analysis.

By the use of SMART model, efficient time management strategies can emerge as a result.

The SMART concept is easy to use and utilise as explained below:

- **Specific**/set a clear objective
- **Measurable**/easy to quantify
- **Achievable**/not impossible to be reached
- **Realistic**/set a realistic goal
- **Timely**/set a clear start timeframe for completion to include start and completion date

Learning to apply the SMART concept has thought me how to focus on priorities and achieve measurable results in a timely manner, which will help to reach my set objectives and goals.

The Pareto principle is a rule central to strategic planning and it measures success by applying the following rule: it focuses on a concept of thinking that highlights that from a task list of 10 objectives; only 2 will prove essential to promote the overall success of the objectives listed initially.

I find the Pareto 80 20 rule principle a viable one that I can identify in real-life, as I experienced it first hand through work practice. To give an example, I can tie the realisation of the principle to delegating work to a team of individuals where the efforts of only 20% of the most hardworking individuals out of the overall team members accounted for the 80% rate of success of the project, while full credit went to the team as a whole.

3.2. Presentation and Public Speaking

Learning presentation and public speaking skills is important as it can help boosting self-confidence and results in creating a positive lasting impression on an audience or an employer. On the other hand, however, *“Fear of public speaking has negative effects on careers and influences success in life negatively when you do nothing about it”*, according to findings of TM Manu, in *Glossophobia*, (2019).

Successful public speaking generally requires preparation, research on the subject discussed as well as coordination of other factors such as arriving on time for the presentation, looking presentable and removing any possible source of distraction. During the actual presentation, the topics discussed have to be brief and concise; speech has to be projected, clear and natural, to get the level of attention desired from the listening public.

Equally, it is very important to introduce the topic at the beginning of the presentation, to catch the attention of the audience. It is also crucial to remember that body posture, the rate of speech and the engagement of the presenter with the audience will make the presentation stand out.

Often, the topic of the conversation becomes secondary to the presentation itself, the audience is likely not to remember what has been discussed, however they will rate the overall performance of the presenter on the level of engagement, clarity and assertiveness.

By using the above guidelines I am looking to improve my public speaking and presentation skills. I am fully confident that following the tips and guidelines of what I’ve learned in class and with constant practice and focus, I will be able reach the stages of delivering successfully professional-level presentations and public speaking.

3.3 Cover Letter

A cover letter is a short piece of business writing attached to a CV and it has the role to briefly introduce the professional background of a candidate, as well as work experience and achievements. A well-written cover letter acts like a link promoting interest to a candidate’s CV in attracting a job interview invite. Although a Cover letter is not a must when applying for a job, CareerBuilder notes in one of their reports that: *“40% of employers are more likely to pay attention when a cover letter is included with an application”*, while *“10% of hiring managers wouldn't hire a candidate who didn't include a cover letter”* (2016)

Cover letter uses note writing style, it has to be very succinct and briefly summarise qualifications and what makes someone a suitable candidate, it must not be very lengthy or elaborate. Cover letter writing allows introducing the set of qualifications recommending a candidate for the vacancy advertised, as well contributions that the candidate can bring to the hiring organization.

Having to write a cover letter in the past with no prior experience it has proved a challenge as I lacked the necessary knowledge to understanding the principles of writing a cover letter.

Recently, learning and understanding the basic principles behind cover letter writing in in class, at University, has made me realise the importance of having access to High Education.

3.4. CV Writing

A CV is a formal piece of writing detailing a candidate's qualifications, skills and experience.

The CV is a document that can be tailored to reflect a candidate's set of skills and highlighting the set of qualities proving why they are the best candidate for the job or the role advertised. A CV includes detailed description of elements proving candidates' desirability, such as:

- SKILLS
- ATTRIBUTES
- KNOWLEDGE
- OTHER KEY ELEMENTS

When writing a CV, including a personal statement, makes a strong first impression and can potentially attract further interest from the recruiting manager. Much as with cover letter writing, a well-written CV can draw the necessary interest for a candidate to be invited out for an interview.

Over the course of my working life I've experienced situations in the past when I was required to write my CV from the scratch. Lacking the necessary skills, the process has proved to be lengthy and difficult. During academic study, having learned the basic principles of CV writing I now understand the structure to help build the perfect resume. For the future, I will have the opportunity of making use of my new learned abilities and academic skills to writing my CV anytime this will be required.

4. Conclusion

In a versatile and extremely competitive job market academic study and skills represent a very important asset. Further Higher Education study provides the individual with the opportunity of learning tools to forge personal and professional success. For me personally, Higher Education is important to ensure that I stay successful in my current job role and I continue to learn skills that will progress my career and further my aspirations and goals.

When the right opportunity will arise, and after having completed my studies, I will have the set of Academic skills necessary to embrace with confidence a new professional venture and I will not be drawn back by any of the obstacles that I encountered prior to attending Higher Education.

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