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ASSIGNMENT 2: SWOT ANALYSIS

This document presents a SWOT analysis of one of the essential skills learned during the Personal, Academic, and Professional Development module. SWOT analysis is a valuable planning tool that effectively conducts situational analysis, especially in program evaluation and quality improvement. Initially designed for business planning, this method has been widely applied across various fields, demonstrating its versatility and effectiveness. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (Harrikari et al. (2021). In this assessment, therefore, I will evaluate specific points of my reflective practice that require improvement. I will identify my strengths and weaknesses, explore the development opportunities available, and recognise the potential threats that may hinder my progress in the reflection process.

Reflection writing is a vital part of the academic journey, significantly contributing to both personal and professional development. By engaging in reflective practice, individuals can critically evaluate their experiences, allowing them to identify strengths and weaknesses in their approaches (Lombardi et al., 2023). According to Fuertes-Camacho, Dulsat-Ortiz, and Álvarez-Canovas (2021), reflective practice is essential for developing critical thinking skills in higher education, boosting students' ability to evaluate their experiences and adapt to new scenarios. Whalen and Paez (2020) emphasise that many students have demonstrated that reflection significantly enhances their cognitive and metacognitive skills, which are crucial for tackling complex challenges effectively.

Strengths

One of my strengths, which will help improve my reflection skills during my academic journey, is my habit of reading. I enjoy reading and gathering information from articles, journals, and books related to my study area. Kuzina, Zhogova and Nadezhdina (2022) state that reading academic journals is essential for improving students' critical thinking skills. Engaging with scholarly articles fosters the analysis of complex arguments and rigorous evaluation of evidence. Al-Omary et al. (2024) agree and underline that continuous reading is an essential and non-negotiable component of continuous professional development for students, especially in healthcare.

Lampi et al. (2023) affirm that reading is essential for academic success and significantly influences student engagement and performance. It directly impacts essential literacy skills like vocabulary and reading comprehension, which are strong educational performance indicators (Talwar et al., 2022). Cowen, Maier, and Price (2009) highlight the importance of reading efficiently because university students often must balance their studies, work, and family commitments.

Weaknesses

One area for improvement in the reflection process is my attention to detail. This became evident when I started using Gibbs's reflective model at university. I have observed that I often struggle to recall the small details of a situation, which leads to incomplete insights. According to Bean and Melzer (2021), attention to detail is vital for enhancing the reflective writing process. It fosters a deeper understanding of the subject and encourages critical thinking, leading to more meaningful insights and a more substantial reflective piece.

Holder et al. (2019) state that Gibbs' reflective cycle in education effectively enhances essential skills like attention to detail. With six phases—description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusions, and action plan—it provides a solid framework for engaging in reflective practice, leading to improved learning outcomes and professional development.

Opportunities

The university offers many support options to help me improve my reflection skills. The Learning Support Team, for example, provides one-to-one study skills sessions and Peer-Assisted Learning (PAL). The PAL sessions typically occur weekly for up to an hour with a trained upper-level student (PAL mentor). Additionally, the University Library offers digital and print collections, online resource lists, Info Skills and Digital Skills training, learning spaces, and face-to-face support. It is essential to highlight the vital support offered by the lectures, which are always available to help every student on their journey to success.

Threats

The first obstacle that is important to mention is the language barrier. Facing higher education is already hard, but it becomes more complicated when English is your second language. Understanding and retaining all the information provided and writing different essays, reports and presentations has been challenging. Research shows that non-native speakers are more confident writing in their first language, leading to difficulties in academic writing in English. They often struggle, especially in the discussion section of their research articles (Canli and YAĞIZ, 2024).

Time management is another big challenge. Finding a balance between studies, family, work, and social life is difficult. According to Cottrell (2024), students will achieve success when they learn how to organise and use their time studying well. By thoughtfully planning and managing their study sessions, students can enhance their focus, retain information better, and ultimately achieve their academic goals. Trentepohl et al. (2022) state that time management is one of the biggest threats to every student's learning path. It profoundly affects university students and directly influences academic performance and procrastination.

Another significant test for me is the perimenopause symptoms that I am currently experiencing. According to Metcalf et al. (2023), there are substantial cognitive problems during perimenopause, with research showing declines in verbal learning,

memory, processing speed, attention, and working memory. These issues hinder daily functioning and academic performance by impairing concentration and information retention. Symptoms like depression and sleep problems can make it harder for mature students to succeed in their studies and achieve academic success. Uzun, Ozcan and Jones (2023) explain that mature students going through menopause face emotional challenges that can impact their well-being. Research shows they often experience fear, irritability, anxiety, and uncertainty, which complicates their ability to manage academic and personal responsibilities.

Conclusion

In this document, I evaluated my reflection skills using a SWOT analysis model. I could examine my strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and understand what must be done to improve a vital skill for my personal, academic and professional development. This examination will enable me to implement effective strategies that enhance my reflection skills, helping me navigate my academic journey confidently and achieve my goals.

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