



Reference list **London**

Employability skills and the path towards your own career: A reflective analysis

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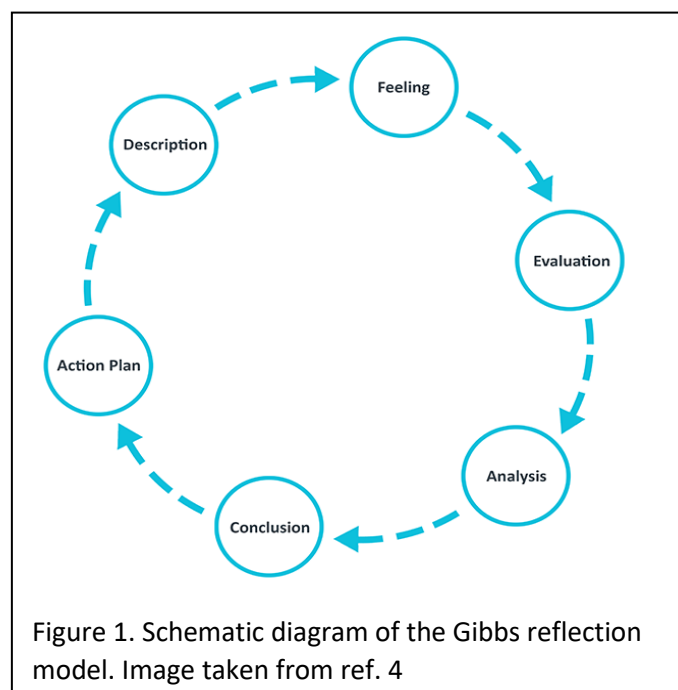
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Introduction

Having the right skills to succeed in your career is a complex problem that needs both research and practice. The Academic and Employability Skills module has helped on identifying the right employability skills for a particular career path. Secondly, each employability skill has been analysed and the students have been engaging with that skill in in-class activities. The employability skills included in the above-mentioned module include time management skills, academic writing skills, paraphrasing and referencing skills, public speaking and giving presentations. In this report, the reflection on a chosen employability skill learnt in this module was performed using a Gibbs reflection model. The chosen employability skill is public speaking and giving oral presentations. An initial introduction of the reflection model used is given, followed by an analysis on the usefulness of the reflection model for this skill. Lastly, it is reflected upon a concrete example of the way in which public speaking has been improved by using information from this course by using the Gibbs reflection model.

Methodology: The Gibbs reflection model

Reflective writing is generally used to give a thorough analysis of a given skill and learning experience. The purpose of reflective writing is to express in more depth the outcomes of an experience and how to improve it. In terms of quantitative assessment, reflection models are used to generate a step-by-step plan that explores learning experiences in more detail. While there are more reflection models that have been proved successful in the analysis of different sets of skills, the Gibbs reflection model is a quick and easy to understand plan that has been used for employability skills. [4] The Gibbs reflection model consists of an initial description of the experience, a check-out of the feelings associated with that experience, the evaluation of the event in the light of the emotions identified, an



analysis of the whole learning process, followed by conclusions and an action plan. (Fig. 2) The last point, the action plan, requires the process of thoughtful conclusion of the lessons learnt and what can be improved in the short and long-term.

Public speaking and giving oral presentations

Public speaking and the ability to give oral presentations has been long studied as a skill required in many career paths. It involves the ability to speak clearly and in a structured manner about topics of your interest in front of a targeted audience. [1] (Fig. 1)

In terms of the Academic and Employability Skills module, we had the chance to firstly analyse presentations given by world-leading speakers and leaders and secondly practice public speaking in front of the class. The 2015 presentation given by Steve Jobs about his career path and the struggles he has faced in his way to a successful career. [5] We have identified positive aspects of the public speaking skills the speaker used to keep his audience interested: being honest and engaging, talking about a personal experience and being charismatic. The in-class activity involved giving a three minute presentation in front of the class in which each of the students has presented with the topic “The biggest achievements of your life”. Taking this chance to present, we had the opportunity to engage with the class and receive feedback from the audience on what worked well and what could be improved. [3]



Figure 2. Image depicting a person giving an oral presentation in front of an audience. Taken from ref.6

Following a personal experience in which I had the chance to exercise my public speaking and the ability to give oral presentations has been analysed using the Gibbs reflective model in a case study presented below:

CASE STUDY: Gibbs reflective model for public speaking skills

1. **The description step:** Last Friday I had a presentation on my Digital Skills module. The purpose of the module was to work in a team to define and present in front of the class the advances of modern technology in the National Rail industry.
I presented the negative and positive impacts of the introduction to a new payment system.
I was in the middle of the presentation when I encountered technical problems related to my microphone and camera.
The module organizer stopped me because the presentation could not be understood. I didn't know what the problem was and I was counted down on my time limit.
2. **The emotion step:** At the beginning of the presentation, I felt very nervous because I am not familiar with using communication academic skills. I felt confused because I was worried about the feedback I will get for the presentation. I panicked when the organizer has notified me to stop. I was worried I will forget everything after he stopped me. I felt ashamed my time was running up and I didn't know how to find the problem.
3. **The evaluation step:** I soon realized that the module organizer was calm and patiently waiting for me to go back to presenting my findings. After that I took a deep breath and realized that the solution was much simpler: my mic was concomitantly connected from my laptop and my phone and I simply had to switch one off.
4. **The analysis step:** Reflecting on my experience, I should have had a demo of my presentation in front of my team in order to ensure everything will be ready for the final presentation. In this way, there would be no accumulated stress associated with the presentation set up going wrong. The nervousness from the beginning of the presentation will also be diminished.
It would have also been a good idea, once the technical problem happened, to ask my teammates for help.
5. **The conclusion step:** To sum up, I realised that public speaking and particularly giving presentations take a lot of practice to master, but there is no end of the world if technical problems arise. Teammates can be the key in technical obstacles as they can see the situation more clearly and give immediate help. The fact that the people in the audience (in my case, the module organizer) were very understanding made me feel that things can go wrong for everybody. This increased my self-esteem that I can go forward and learn from my mistakes for future experiences.
6. **The action plan:**
 - Always have a demo before the official presentation with the team members;
 - Think of possible obstacles beforehand and create quick solution plans to help you immediately in the presentations;
 - Let some additional free time to solve any unexpected obstacles;
 - Back up the presentation on multiple devices.

Conclusions

The present report gave an outline of the reflective analysis of a crucial employability skill developed during the Academic and Employability Skills module: public speaking and the ability to give oral presentations. Reflective writing is used to give a more in-depth analysis of a targeted skill in a particular learning experience. The experience involving the skill was assessed using the Scheme of the Gibbs reflection model. Using the Gibbs plan, the obstacles to learning in the present experience and a future plan for improving public speaking were identified: including having a demo version of your presentation, always having a back-up and relying on your team members for help. To conclude with, the present module has been successful in helping students identify and practice employability skills needed in the workplace.

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