



Reflective Essay

Professional Internship at EY Vietnam

Course: ICT20015 - Professional Internship

Name: Nguyen Dinh Nhat Minh

ID: 103802490

Convenor: Doan Xuan Huy Minh

Introduction

Introspection, or thinking back on our past experiences, is essential to growing personally and conquering obstacles. By reflecting on the past, we may learn essential lessons, pinpoint growth opportunities, and become more conscious of our advantages and disadvantages. As Rogers (2001) suggested, intellectually credible reflective activities can help cultivate attention and analysis habits in individuals and groups, which will aid higher education in addressing social problems. Additionally, they can help people become resourceful and resilient in the face of life's unpredictable challenges. Additionally, reflective practices are a great benefactor in developing and advancing our professionalism, according to Tarrant (2013).

This reflective essay examines how the EY internship has influenced my personal and intellectual growth. Serving as a crucial element in the narrative of my life, the opportunity to intern at EY has been instrumental in shaping my encounters. Instead of merely narrating events, this essay aims to analyze, discuss, and reflect on these three main areas of interest: (1) the workplace culture of EY, (2) the skills I acquired throughout the internship, and (3) how my experience shaped my future practices.

Workplace Culture

The "sum of shared ideas, practices and material objects that people create to make sense of, adapt to, and thrive in their environments" (Furze et al., 2014, p. 54) is what we often refer to as a given area's culture. Not only does this adage apply to all parts of the globe, but it also holds true in smaller contexts, such as corporations or workplaces. Similar to how societal culture shapes an area's identity, workplace culture, while open to interpretation, still "refers to the shared values, beliefs, and behaviours by members of a given organization" (Kwantes & Glazer, 2017).

According to LaConte (2018), culture may be divided into two main categories: (1) the surface aspect, which consists of the easily noticeable superficial traits, and the deeper, more complex parts, which are sometimes referred to as the (2) deep aspect. These multifaceted aspects of culture have an impact on the dynamics of the workplace at EY.

The surface aspect:

The external layer (surface aspect) contributes to the overall atmosphere and identity of the company. Many attributes are contributing to the surface level of

culture. However, I would focus on the important ones, such as organizational structure and personnel facade.

With regard to organizational structure, jobs inside the company are arranged in a well-defined format, and responsibilities are assigned fairly and suitably to each level. Suppose I recall correctly, in every engagement I am a part of, after partners close deals with clients. In that case, managers make plans and give specific assignments to the seniors, who would divide up the detailed tasks and enlist the assistance of the staff and interns. In my opinion, this precise and goal-oriented framework significantly enhanced my understanding of my place in the ecosystem and, more significantly, increased the significance of my participation in initiatives.

In the first week, many newcomers and I were involved in a special training session about EY's professionalism. I distinctly remember that employees of the firm are required to maintain the highest standards of professionalism in their appearance and communication, both internally and externally. When interacting with external parties, employees are expected to adhere to the organization's values, essential for making a good impression on stakeholders and clients. This alignment strengthens the business's adherence to fundamental values and fosters a reputation for reliability. On the inside, this professionalism creates a culture of excellence that supports productive collaboration, transparent communication, and a positive work environment that promotes learning and development. "Professionalism emphasizes the value of peers as a source of regulation and reinforces standards of behaviour that motivate performance" (Kerr & Jermier, 1978).

One interesting thing I noticed about the firm's communication style is that the conflict resolution methods employed by my firm roughly follow the 7-step model outlined by Levine in 1998, which involves approaching conflicts with an open mind, sharing perspectives, actively listening to other's ideas, and collaboratively develop solutions satisfactory to all parties involved. Throughout my engagements, when conflict arises, we try to use the steps above to resolve conflicts as peacefully as possible and avoid worse confrontations.

The deep aspect:

Exploring the deeper culture of EY allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the guiding principles that shape employee interactions, client relationships, and the overall ethos of the firm. In the subsequent discussion, I will highlight the aspects of deep culture that I deem most significant, emphasizing their impact on me, which

are the core values and the environment within EY.

"Building a better working world" stands as more than just a slogan for EY; it encapsulates the organization's fundamental values. At its core, this statement embodies the aspiration to contribute meaningfully to the global business environment, exceeding conventional notions of corporate success. It serves as a guiding principle that shapes EY's actions, decisions, and engagements on a global scale. Moreover, as an international workplace, EY Vietnam has successfully created a positive culture that motivates connection and engagement among employees. Working here has taught me that, to uphold the company's standards, I need to collaborate with everyone, so I feel like I'm working toward a shared goal for everyone involved rather than just myself. It's not about fitting in but about cooperating to accomplish a shared objective of progress, innovation, and positive change. Employees at EY are empowered to achieve and beyond the company's goals because of the firm foundation provided by the organization's principles.

When it comes to the environment, I would describe it as having a harmonious blend of seriousness and enjoyment, both of which contribute to a dynamic atmosphere. On one hand, we take our work seriously and make sure we're doing things right. We're committed to our responsibilities and getting the job done properly; these qualities exist because the employees here tend to be detail-oriented, and they make sure that ethics show up in their work. On the other hand, we also like to have a good time. There's a friendly and enjoyable atmosphere that allows us to be creative and have fun together. So, it's a nice balance where we work hard, but we also appreciate the lighter side of things, making our workplace both focused and enjoyable.

Retrospectively, I believe the company has a consideration for the work-life balance of its employees, given the various non-work-related perks many, including myself, have received. These benefits, such as complimentary travel, covered work-related expenses during travel, and periodic celebrations, have played a crucial role in helping us manage the year-round workload effectively. Bringing work/life balance into practice could help to retain employees, increase motivation and productivity, reduce absences, and decrease health care costs and stress-related illnesses. (Lockwood, 2003)

Through observation and reflection on the duality of the culture of EY, I have come to appreciate its contribution to making a well-structured, goal-oriented, and balanced

organization. While the surface aspects provide a visible framework, the depth elements ensure that this structure is not merely superficial but rooted in a strong cultural foundation. This synergy creates an environment where goals are not only set but are deeply ingrained in the organisation's fabric, guiding actions and decisions at every level.

Workplace Skills

In this section, I will discuss the skills I cultivate for myself before and during the internship. I aimed to strike a balance between the technical and the interpersonal skills, since I firmly believe that proficiency in both realms is critical for effectively navigating the dynamic landscape of the workforce.

Prior Skills:

My university education has been instrumental in honing essential skills for overcoming challenges encountered in my role at EY. More specifically, the knowledge acquired through courses like database systems and business information has proven invaluable in helping me analyze and process data and information. These courses have equipped me with the technical proficiency needed to navigate complex datasets and promoted a keen understanding of how businesses function at their core. My exposure to various settings in database systems and business information classes has allowed me to choose suitable solutions and weigh their implications carefully, which is crucial in navigating the intricate data landscapes at EY. Furthermore, the analytical acumen developed at university serves as a robust foundation for interpreting complex data patterns, contributing meaningful insights to the auditing process.

The framework proposed by Middleton (2002) provides an understanding of the process that influences how the university courses have benefited me. Principally, when I ran into problems at work, I tried to comprehend the issue and its surrounding details. Then I connected my findings to the relevant theory and/or practice I had learned during my time at university. Lastly, I tried to solve the problem by putting what I had learned into practice.

Developed Skills:

As an IT auditor, I've had to acclimate myself to unfamiliar concepts and knowledge within the realm of finance and accounting principles. This adjustment is essential as IT auditors are required not only to navigate their specific work scope but also to assist financial auditors in analyzing and processing data. Entering the finance field as a newcomer, grappling with the theoretical intricacies presented by accounting

proved challenging initially. There were moments when I found myself researching immediately after training sessions to solidify my understanding of the basics and to see if I had missed anything important. However, over time, I've grown more adept at contributing to financial auditing as well as other relevant accounting tasks. Despite the initial challenges, this excursion has been a valuable learning experience, exposing me to new and intriguing aspects of the field.

In refining my professional toolkit, Microsoft Office's suite has proven notably efficient. Despite having some experience with these tools, my initial tasks revealed that my familiarity only scratched the surface of their capabilities. Working as an intern in a role similar to that of a level one assistant, I encountered identical challenges, given that our job's difficulty level is comparable, and it quickly became clear why my prior Excel and Word experience was elemental, but thankfully, engaging in daily tasks exposed me to crucial commands and shortcuts that make the job less of a hassle. I learned to expedite the process of reconciliation between the general ledger and the trial balance using the VLOOKUP function, eliminating the need for manual review of thousands of entries by quickly finding necessary data based on identifiers. Additionally, I learned to use the pivot table tool for efficient data summation based on selected columns. When encountering extensive datasets that Excel could not handle, I would utilize Alteryx, a data analytics platform, to do my bidding, as it streamlines data extraction and processing. When financial auditors sought analysis, I employed a patented EY-exclusive tool utilizing computational magic for efficient data analysis, limited by privacy regulations; I could only tell that this tool would work its magic on imported data and create reports in a matter of minutes. These commands and tools significantly contributed to my development as an IT auditor. However, their effectiveness requires dedicated time for research and practice, aligning with the notion from Jonides (2004) that learning and practice enhance problem-solving skills and foster the adoption of more effective strategies.

As far as professionalism is concerned, a more formal communication style was required once one entered a professional context. I have realized that maintaining a professional image through communication is important since it is consistent with EY's core principles and provides a standard for developing a professional persona. As such, developing my communication abilities has required careful thought to phrase and word choices. Since the beginning of my internship at EY, I have been actively researching the topic in an effort to develop and maintain a professional manner. I highly recommend the book on corporate communication by Dwyer & Hopwood as an invaluable resource for those seeking to enhance their communication skills in the

workplace. This guide has significantly contributed to my understanding of effective communication, extending beyond interactions with colleagues to encompass self-assessment and interpersonal development. The book highlights teamwork as a collaborative effort based on cooperation, understanding, and information sharing. It has not only improved my team communication skills but also provided valuable insights into my own self-assessment and personal growth. Furthermore, it underscores the significance of active listening for a comprehensive understanding of messages, emphasizing the detrimental impact of distractions. This dual focus on external and internal communication skills has significantly shaped my professional communication approach.

Apart from the skills that were mentioned before, I have also developed a range of adaptable abilities that I can use in a variety of settings. They include being more proactive and having a greater sense of goal orientation. The shift in my behaviour toward a greater degree of initiative represents my ability to proactively ask for help and voluntarily take on more duties after completing my original assignments. "proactive behaviour is associated with positive outcomes, including greater learning, social integration, role innovation, job satisfaction, and lower intention of leaving." (Ashforth et al., 2007). In addition, the sense of goal orientation has led to more conscientious monitoring of my advancement and KPIs, emphasizing the need to achieve deadlines and improve my overall performance. Despite occasionally extending work hours, the sense of accomplishment from a job well done is truly gratifying.

Learning is truly an endless journey, and my horizon expanded significantly during the internship period. During the few weeks into the internship, I experienced a humbling realization when I thought I was proficient in my knowledge and skills, only to recognize the mistake of being overly confident in my office technicality. Traversing deep into the working world, I started to acknowledge the importance of humility and a growth mindset; hence, I embraced the opportunity to develop both professionally and personally.

Future Practice

My time at EY has greatly influenced my future objectives and methods. I've learned important lessons and qualities from this experience that will help me develop habits essential to my future success. After reflecting on my cultural experience, I have seen how critical it is to comprehend the elements that go into creating a supportive work

environment. This knowledge not only improves my social skills, which help me resolve conflicts and solve problems but also encourages improved teamwork among coworkers. I believe practising this type of cultural adaptation and expression could enhance my intercultural adaptation skills when necessary. As Pietilä (2010) points out, "Adapting to a new culture is a complex and dynamic process." The accessible and practical framework taken from my experience has the potential to assist me in navigating business dealings beyond the borders of my current country.

Applying EY's core values, including the emphasis on maintaining a work-life balance and cultivating a professional mindset, will benefit me within the company and in various areas and future employment. These values are crucial in enhancing my overall well-being, fostering sustainable productivity, and establishing a solid professional foundation essential for success within and beyond the EY workplace. By prioritizing work-life balance and embracing a professional mindset, I am contributing to a positive and efficient work environment within the company and equipping myself with transferable professionalism that is highly valued in the broader professional landscape.

Turning to my skills, I recognize the need for continuous improvement, embracing a lifelong learning approach. As far as technical skills are concerned, I aim to expand my knowledge beyond IT auditing. While proficiency in this area is crucial in my time at EY, broadening my understanding of other facets of technology will enhance my role as an IT Auditor and position me as a well-informed tech professional. After discussing the technical aspect of skills, I would like to delve deeper into the interpersonal side of things. Emphasizing effective communication and cultivating productive behaviour has been a significant focus in my work. I intend to seamlessly integrate these skills into my daily life and academic pursuits, acknowledging that although these lessons may require adjustment, they will enhance productivity and meaningful contributions across various aspects of my life. As Misra and Khurana (2017) note, employers prioritize transferable skills during recruitment, emphasizing their importance in navigating diverse professional landscapes.

Conclusion

In retrospect, my internship at EY has been transformative, influencing my technical skills and shaping my values and professional principles. The deep dive into EY's culture, the acquisition of valuable skills, and the application of academic knowledge have propelled me toward a future where I envision myself as a conscientious and

innovative IT auditor. The pillars of my future practices will be the commitment to core values, effective conflict resolution, technological proficiency, continuous learning, refined communication, and a harmonious work-life balance. As I navigate the dynamic landscape of IT auditing, I carry the lessons learned at EY, confident that they will serve as a foundation for meaningful contributions to the evolving world of technology and business.

References

- Ashforth, B. E., Sluss, D. M., & Saks, A. M. (2007). Socialization tactics, proactive behavior, and newcomer learning: Integrating socialization models. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 70(3), 447-462.
- Dwyer, J., & Hopwood, N. (2015). *The Business Communication Handbook*, 357-358. Cengage Australia.
- Furze, B., et al. (2014). *Sociology in Today's World*. Cengage Learning, South Melbourne, Australia.
- Jonides, J. (2004). How does practice make perfect? *Nature Neuroscience*, 7(1), 10-11.
- Kerr, S., & Jermier, J. M. (1978). Substitutes for leadership: Their meaning and measurement. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 22, 375-403.
- Kwantes, C. T., & Glazer, S. (2017). *Culture, Organizations, and Work*. Springer International Publishing.
- LaConte, G. (2018, April 12). Understanding the Culture of a Company, Part 1: Surface Culture. *LaConte Consulting*. [Online] Available at: <https://laconteconsulting.com/2018/04/12/understanding-the-culture-part-1-surface>
- Levine, S. (1998). *Getting to Resolution: Turning Conflict Into Collaboration*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco.
- Lockwood, N. R. (2003). Work/life balance: Challenges and Solutions. *SHRM Research*, USA, 2(10).
- Middleton, H. (2002). Complex problem solving in a workplace setting. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 37(1), 67–84. doi:10.1016/s0883-0355(02)00022-8
- Misra, R. K., & Khurana, K. (2017). Employability skills among information technology professionals: A literature review. *Procedia Computer Science*, 122, 63-70.
- Pietilä, I. 2010, 'Intercultural adaptation as a shared learning process in the life-course' in V Korhonen (ed), *Cross-cultural Lifelong Learning*, Tampere University, pp. 61-79.
- Rogers, R. R. (2001). *Innovative Higher Education*, 26(1), 37–57. doi:10.1023/a:1010986404527
- Tarrant, P. (2013). *Reflective Practice and Professional Development*, 1-232.