**Communication skills Part 1**

**Assignment task**

**Reflective writing**

**Task: Reflect on the friendship you had in your secondary school and write a 1500-word reflective paper. You are required to use Gibbs’ (1988) six-element reflective model for this task.**

**Communication Skills Part 1**

**Reflective Writing**

**My secondary school friends**

**Student ID: 302341**

**Number of words: 1577**

**CONTENTS**

**Introduction 4**

**Description 4**

**Feelings and thoughts 4**

**Evaluation 5**

**Analysis 5**

**Conclusion 6**

**Action plan 6**

**References 7**

**Introduction**

In many people’s imaginations, secondary school life is the easiest and the most enjoyable time. While I can confidently claim that I did have an unforgettable and remarkable time in my secondary school, which I want to cherish all my life, that does not mean that nothing not-so-beautiful ever happened in my secondary school life. While it is true that there are various sides to a student’s school life such as teaching and learning, extra-curricular activities and exams, in this reflective work, I am going to focus on my friends and the influence they have had on me. I have often used entries in my reflective journal from secondary school for producing this written work. This paper will begin with my reasons for going to that secondary school and expectations I had of going there; then, after describing my friend circle, I will explain my feelings and thoughts about them; finally, I will evaluate and analyse my friendship with them before presenting my conclusions and action plan for the future.

**Description of my secondary school friends**

This reflective paper is based on my six friends, three of them had been my friends since my primary school, and the other three were my new secondary school friends who I met in year 7. It is not to say that I only had these six friends; in fact, I had many friends for I was one of the most popular students in my school. Said that, although I had expected that my friendship with the three primary schoolmates would grow deeper and stronger, surprisingly that did not happen; on the other hand, it was the other three friends that I grew closer to as years passed by. Although my three friends from the primary were still my very good friends, I felt that the newer three had taken over them as my best friends. One reason for this could be that our interests and habits, things we enjoyed doing and talking about, career ambitions, subjects we liked and the general outlook about life had all started to differ as we moved from primary to secondary school. Consequently, we found pleasure with those who we happened to be similar with, and that was how, I believe, I ended up with the three new friends.

**Feelings and thoughts**

Reflecting on my friendship and the feelings and thoughts I have about my friends, it is fair to say that they changed a lot from year 7 to year 11. In the first two or three years, I felt that I was quite dependent on my friends, emotionally and socially, but then things changed the other way around – they seemed to be relying on me for a lot of things. For instance, in year 7 and year 8, I would run to my friends as soon as I saw them for whatsoever reason, but it happens in the opposite direction these days. I thought that this change was because of my personality and attitude to my friends. Overall, what I had with my newly made school friends was similar to what Tangney et al, (2007) call character friendship because looking back at that friendship, I think the main characteristics of our relationship were personality emotions such as trust, hope, security, self-esteem, well-being and empathy. On the contrary, although it may sound unfair, the friendship between my primary schoolmates and me could be labelled survival friendship or ‘friendship of utility’, as Kelly et al. (2010) call it because we were friends only because we found each other useful in one way or another. In summary, the new friends I made in my secondary school seemed to have greater influence in my life than my primary schoolmates.

**Evaluation**

There was both good and not-so-good consequences of having different secondary school friends. The first good thing, probably the best, was that I had great fun with them in all possible ways. We experimented various types of drinks such as rainforest coffee; ate in international restaurants; visited parks; laughed out loud; went to ballet and acting classes together; had sleepovers and watched ‘Vampire diaries.’ As a result of having the best friends, I always felt, as Brennan (2021) suggests, stress-free, energetic and happy. Secondly, we studied together as much as possible, helping, motivating and challenging each other which meant that all of us were good, not very good though, at most subjects because combined study, as Pettinati et al. (2006) advocate, enhances creativity, productivity and memory. Above all, my friends helped me grow to what I am today – an independent, brave, empathetic and caring person. However, there were other things, too, that I am not very proud of, for example, losing some of my primary school friends as I got closer to new friends, being told off by some teachers for talking and laughing in lessons and not stretching or challenging myself when it came to studying. But, thinking over and reflecting on my friends and things we did together, I am glad that each of them was equally crucial in my life; I learned from each situation, each deed regardless they were positive or negative.

**Analysis**

Analysing the whole process of making and losing friends, I am tempted to believe that this cycle of making-losing friends might be a lifelong process. In other words, a person makes and loses friends all their life, and no one can do anything about it as Blair (2008) claims, ‘friendship is created and destroyed at unexpected places and times.’ Several of my secondary school friends have chosen different directions in life and career, some very unexpected, some quite interesting, some extremely challenging, but I believe our early friendship must have played a role in our present life and careers. Then, I ponder over the question that I have been asked by many – is it better to have a few best friends, or many normal friends? From my own experience, I will doubtlessly go with the former option – having a few best friends. Instead of having many friends but not that close to anyone, not being able to open up fully with anybody, I would prefer to have a few, even one, very special friend with who I can create a sense of ‘best friends forever.’ Another thought is that a person starts their life with no friends but just with their family, and at the latter stage of their life, under normal circumstances, they end up with their family only, not with their friends. This may not be true for everyone, but looking at my older friends and family members, this could be a reality for many.

**Conclusion**

This section is about additional things and alternatives I could have done, and what I have learned in regard to my secondary school friends. One thing I could have accomplished was keeping friendship with my primary schoolmates at the same time as making new friends, however, at times I found that it was not practical or advisable because some of them did not seem to be comfortable enough in the presence of my new friends. Nonetheless, had I wanted to keep friends with my primary schoolmates, I could have done something about it, for example, trying to convince my new friends that my old companions were good enough to be in our gang. Another later observation about my friend circle was that we were all from the same or similar race, background and culture. Respecting that I did not choose my friends, they just happened to be my friends, I now feel that I could have gained a lot more for my future had I had some friends from other cultures and backgrounds. Considering that our school was a multicultural one, I could have made friends from different cultures and backgrounds because, I was, still am, very interested in world cultures and keen on knowing more about and experiencing some.

**Action plan**

Although there are a number of measures I would want to implement if I could go back to my secondary school life, I would focus on three. First, I would not stop myself from going for the extra mile when it came to studies. I realise that some of us, including myself, had the potential to do much better in exams and assessment, but we just refused to shine more, we could not be bothered to work harder, but I would change that if I could. Although getting higher scores and grades in exams would not have helped me more than they already have for my current life, that may not have been the case for some of my friends. Secondly, I would definitely try to make friends with individuals from different cultures and backgrounds; it would have prepared me to live a life in a cosmopolitan city like this one, and work with individuals from every part of the world. This would also help me grow to a more open-minded and tolerant human which would in turn enable me to become truly happy in today’s world. Finally, I would avoid doing unnecessary things with my friends while in lessons that could make my teachers upset or angry. Although my teachers had never had to deal with me in my secondary school, they had to with some of my friends. Therefore, I would instead try to become a role model student as I believe individuals remember us for various things and I want to be remembered for good reasons.

(1577 words)

**References**

Bergen, V.P., McGrath, K., and Quin, D. (2020). The benefits of close student relationships and how to nurture them. In Bergen, McGrath and Quin (Ed.) *Inclusive Education for the 21st century*. Allen & Unwin, pp. 296-316.

Blair, L. (2018). Loneliness isn’t inevitable – a guide to making new friends. Life and Style. (Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/apr/30/how-to-make-new-friends-adult-lonely-leap-of-faith>. Accessed in March 2020.

Brennan, D. (2021) Psychological benefits of friendship. *Psychology Quarterly*. 2(3). Pp. 1-8.

Johnson, A. J. (2001). Examining the maintenance of friendships: are there differences between geographically close and long-distance friends? *Communication Quarterly*, 49, pp. 424-435.

Kelly, J. R., Lehmiller, J. J. and Machia, L. V. (2010). Commitment in friends with benefit relationships. Personal Relationships, 19 (1), pp. 18-54.

Pettinati, H. M., Anton, R. F. and Willenbring, M. L. (2006). The combine study. *Psychiatry*. 3(10), pp. 36-39.

Tangney, J. P., Stuewig, J. and Mashek, D. J. (2007). Moral emotions and moral behaviour. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 58, pp. 345-372.