End of Module Assignment: e-Portfolio Submission

Link to online e-portfolio – Module 8 – Research Methods and Professional Practice
- https://rjames2502.github.io/e-portfolio/Module%208.html

This essay is a reflection of the Research Methods and Professional Practice (RMPP) Module.

I am employed as a Network Architect, and work mainly on large international projects. This role is a technical one, but there are large elements where I need to be able to demonstrate project management skills as well as presentation skills for projects I am working on. I am often involved in RFI/RFQ processes (techtarget, 2023) so at the beginning of the module, I was expecting to be quite comfortable with most of the content. Even though I was broadly familiar with the concepts, there were areas such as project methodology, where I still felt that I had learned something important or useful, both for my future studies, but also for my current professional role (Essex, ND), (Farquhar, 2012). Skills learned for the MSc, are directly transferrable to my job.

In general, and on past modules such as Risk Management, I have not felt confident when tackling the analysis of data and statistics together. In my professional life, I routinely review different types of data, but I do not need to prepare anything myself, with data I have gathered via questionnaires or surveys, or make use of anything more than basic statistics. I now clearly understand the importance of designing questionnaires without any pre-conceived ideas, to avoid bias and manipulation. For some topics, after reading the module literature, I felt there was benefit in additional reading such as to explain topics in a different way e.g. (Stevens ,2023), (Ali et al, 2016). I feel better prepared to collate and analyse data, and it does not seem as daunting. Reviewing the statistical examples, and then the subsequent analysis of data, helped solidify the concepts, and I feel I have a better understanding of the benefits and drawbacks of the different approaches and methods than I did before the module.

When performing research, similar to my job, it is important to be specific in the focus, and to analyse information from different sources, even if this is more time consuming to help avoid bias and to improve accuracy (Nassaji, 2020). I had also never really considered ethics, when thinking about questionnaire format. Data protection, with all of the new regulations such as GDPR (GDPR, ND) among others, should also be considered.

Additionally, I have a new understanding of the importance of hypothesis testing. It may help to give the research a structure or point, which can help when analysing the data collected. Previously, especially from my BSc studies, I was aware of hypothesis testing, but I had not put a lot of importance on it, and regarded it as optional in most respects.

Time management for me, became a critical topic during this module. Normally I ensure that I am aware of the schedule, and make a conscious effort to avoid last-minute rushes to complete either the normal weekly tasks, or assignments set throughout the whole module. On all past modules, I have tried to ensure that assignments are ready early, so the last few days are only for review. This was the same approach for modules with groupwork.

During this module however, this was not possible, and I had to sometimes adapt and prioritize tasks based on urgency. Work and family commitments were part of the reason as usual. Unfortunately, my mother also passed away just as this module was starting, and I found it initially difficult to find motivation for study. I am still in two minds, whether or not I should have deferred this module.

It felt like I was playing "catch-up" for a lot of the time, and I felt studied out.

There were two assessments during the module – the literature review, and the research proposal presentation, and results were mixed.

For the literature review, I received the lowest mark yet for any assessment, and I was disappointed. I reviewed the effects of lockdown on productivity using communications tools. The feedback from my tutor was that my review was too broad, with no real focus in one area. I understand the feedback, and in hindsight, I would do it differently. I also dropped easy points which is avoidable.

For the research proposal presentation, I proposed to study Security of data in the Cloud vs being held in company managed Datacentres. I managed to redeem myself a bit, I think primarily because I am comfortable with creating presentations, but also, because I understood the topic more as I work in the field. This is a good thing, when the research is on a familiar topic, but it also goes to show that the same focus needs to go into research on topics that I may not be so familiar with, in order to complete the research to a satisfactory level. No assumption of the readers" knowledge should be made, so the research would need to be conducted, analysed and presented in a clear and logical way, to ensure that the results presented are understood and without bias.

From a personal development perspective, I have been considering a slight change in career direction, and would like to evolve into a Cloud Security Architect. I will try and develop my skillset, through the MSc project, experience gained at work, and through additional dedicated study, to move my career in that direction. This will allow me to also remain relevantly skilled in the marketplace. Learning Python properly, would also be of benefit.

On the whole, I have enjoyed this module. I feel more comfortable with the idea of tackling the project than I did prior to the module beginning, and I think this is mainly because I understand better the process and methodology behind it better. There is definitely room for personal improvement, and the focus there will include solidifying the statistics knowledge, developing my personal writing style and becoming more disciplined with my time.

(977 words)

References:

Ali, Zulifiqar. Bhaskar, S Bala. (2016). Basic statistical tools in research and data analysis. Available from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5037948/ [Accessed 28 October 2023].

Essex, University of. (ND). How to write a research project. Available from: https://www.my-course.co.uk/pluginfile.php/259821/mod_resource/content/1/UoE%20-%20How%20to%20Write%20a%20Research%20Project.pdf [Accessed 28 October 2023].

Farquhar, Jillian Dawes. (2012). Writing and Presenting Your Research. Available from: https://methods-sagepub-com.uniessexlib.idm.oclc.org/book/case-study-research-for-business/n9.xml [Accessed 28 October 2023].

GDPR. (ND). Complete guide to GDPR compliance. Available from: https://gdpr.eu [Accessed 28 October 2023].

Nassaji, Hossein. (2020). The importance of using multiple measures or data sources in L2 instructional research. Available from: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1362168820906908 [Accessed 28 October 2023].

Stevens, Emily. (2023). Quantitative vs Qualitative Data: What's the difference? Available from: https://careerfoundry.com/en/blog/data-analytics/difference-between-quantitative-and-qualitative-data/#:~:text=Quantitative%20data%20is%20anything%20that,such%20as%20colors%20or%20emotions. [Accessed 28 October 2023].

Techtarget. (2023). RFI vs. RFP vs. RFQ: What are the differences? Available from: https://www.techtarget.com/searchcio/tip/RFI-vs-RFP-vs-RFQ-What-are-the-differences [Accessed 28 October 2023].