Research Methods and Professional Practice Final Reflective Piece

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As I sit to write this final reflection piece on my time in the Research Methods and Professional Practice module, I was initially struck by dissatisfaction, but as I reflect, this feeling gives way to determination. The module initially began quite well, I believed, and I had hoped that it would assist me with developing my writing and presentation skills and provide some insight on my professional growth. In this reflective piece, I aim to critically analyze my thoughts, feelings, and personal development throughout the module.

Initially, I approached the module with apprehension as the content was significantly more focused on writing than previous courses. While I would argue that I have strong writing skills, my grading and feedback with the first assignment indicated that I was either mistaken, not able to dedicate enough time to the course to receive a more favourable grade, and/or disinterested in the topic – which upon this reflection appears to be a major contribution to my dissatisfaction. The first assignment had us perform a literature review for which we chose a topic in Unit 1 and, while I will say there were many topics to choose from, they were all quite disinteresting to me. Each topic felt like a chore to internalize. While I am still not quite sure why I felt this way, I can say that my disinterest in the presented topics most likely led me to choose a topic that was not ideal. My topic choice was “the impact of communication technology on employees’ productivity during government mandated lockdown in Canada”, “in Canada” being another choice, between “globally” or “a country of your choice”. The “in Canada” was another choice that led to my discontent in the results that I achieved. Regardless of my initial results, at this point I was locked into a topic I was dissatisfied with.

A negative of the course for me was a recurring theme: quality throughout the program. An example of this was in assignment 1, the literature review, where the font Arial was the only approved font to be used. This requirement was not in the assignment page but was instead provided in a lecture and, as far as I can tell, I was marked down on this. I will not belabour my point, as I have pointed out mistakes, irritations, and hypocrisy many times throughout my experience in the program, and I could write a book at this point.

As the course progressed, I recognized that my primary issue was time – this has been a recurring problem for me. Being a systems administrator, my job takes a significant amount of my time. I have previously leaned on this excuse to validate myself, I suppose, since I am the only person affected. My secondary issue that I grappled with was my disinterest, partly due to the nature of the course (I am entirely uninterested in the research or publishing of academic papers) but also my decisions early on regarding the choice of topic. This snowballed into a feeling of malaise towards the module and minor procrastination, compounding my primary issue of time. I recognize now confronting these thoughts earlier on in the module would have been beneficial for me and my results. Although very late, I am putting as much time and effort into the final assignment as I can to make up for my mistakes.

A positive aspect of the module for me was the encouragement of feedback, a realization that came slightly too late. Getting feedback on my literature review may have steered me to a topic that was more interesting to me. Another positive and interesting topic during the module was ethical considerations. As I worked through the unit activities, there were several ethics questions that prompted me to reflect on ethics in my professional development, and how I could improve. I realized that ethical considerations are not merely checkboxes, but something to consider in not just academia, but also in other aspects of my life. This importance was not lost on me as I read and contributed to the collaborative discussions, which provided valuable insights and various perspectives to consider.

In assignment 2, the research proposal presentation, I was blindsided by my first attempt being a failure, my first in the program. Initially, I was upset given the effort I had put into the assignment, considering we also had to create a narrated presentation alongside the proposal itself. Spending significant time to have it essentially thrown in the trash was shocking, but looking back, was an important lesson for me. I have used this realization recently in my professional life. As incredibly hectic and non-stop everything feels, emotion should not dictate progress insofar as it pertains to compulsive projects. Every project and every task should be a nice-to-have, until it isn’t.

In summary, throughout this module I have slowly come to appreciate the emphasis on reflection, something I disregarded even though I knew that it would be important to the quality of my work. Writing this reflective piece, for example, has singlehandedly raised my appreciation for the content of the module and my interest in it, regardless of the issues I had with it. While my overall results for the course are not ideal, my initial perceived triumph and consequent stumbling have culminated in this – a truly reflective conversation with myself on where I was and where I would like to be, from both a module and a personal perspective. I see now how my behaviour has evolved from negativity and disinterest to positivity and awareness. This module has ultimately led me to a realization in my professional and personal life; reflection and time-management are core skills that I need to practice much more often.