

Personal and professional development plan education essay

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This assignment will mirror my knowledge and understanding of the personal and professional skills that are needed to promote staff and career development in an organizational environment of my choice, i. e. PARKOUR UK. In addition, by carrying out this assignment, I will develop my ability to organize, manage and practice a range of approaches to improve my performance as self-directed learner in preparation for work and career development. Given the fact that I will be writing about my personal and professional development within this assignment, I find it necessary to reveal my greatest passion – extreme sports – from the very beginning, as it is a cornerstone in both the personal and professional aspects of my life. It began out of curiosity, it instantly tuned into a hobby and then it rapidly transformed into a lifestyle. My lifestyle is called PARKOUR. I know... it does not quite ring a bell. When people hear this name for the first time, they are normally overwhelmed with an expression of amazement and doubt probably thinking: what is he talking about or what does he mean by that? Since the field of my personal and professional activity is not quite known to the masses, I will commence by introducing it to the readers. PARKOUR (PK), originally known as L'art Du Deplacement, is a French sport founded in the 1980s by a group of nine talented young men, as follows: David Belle, Yann Hnautra, Chau Belle, Laurent Piemontesi, Sebastien Foucan, Guylain N'Guba Boyeke, Charles Perriere, Malik Diouf and Williams Belle (PARKOUR UK 2013). As defined by the online Oxford Dictionary, PK is " the activity or sport of moving rapidly through an area, typically in an urban environment, negotiating obstacles by running, jumping, and climbing." According to David Belle, PK is " in the strictest sense, the art of moving through your

environment as swiftly and effectively as possible using only the human body" (PARKOUR TRAIN 2012). As further presented by the same source, this time in a broader sense, PK is " the discipline of developing the physical and mental capacity of the human being while through training to overcome obstacles" (idem). Apparently, in Belle's view regarding PK, the emphasis is placed on the utility of training. I am mentioning this as many consider that in practice, PK equates L'art Du Deplacement and FREERUNNING, although there is a slight difference between them. Deriving from PK, FREERUNNING was invented by Sebastien Foucan, " who focused on the aspect of freedom offered by the training of this discipline" (idem), rather than its utility. As such, although many PK or L'art du Deplacement practitioners regard the two as similar, others focus their attention primarily on the aesthetic movements while FREERUNNING, thus departing from Belle's principle of utility (idem). If Belle designated the term PARKOUR in 1998, then FREERUNNING was the creation of Guillaume Pelletier, a French practitioner of the sport who participated in the production of Jump London, a documentary presented by Channel 4 in 2003. Guillaume used this term in order to describe the essence of this newly emerged sport to the English audience (PARKOUR UK 2013). Moving from definitions and founders to personal experiences and practice, I will further describe how I first got in touch with PK. My elder brother is himself a fan and practitioner of PK, so I basically grew up with this sport. Whenever we went out to play, my brother and his friends practiced PK under my enchanted gaze. Little by little, and mostly out of curiosity at first, I started doing it myself and so, without really noticing, I found myself drawn and completely absorbed by this sport and its

magic. Nothing compares to the feeling of mixed freedom, control and adrenaline it generates. It is absolutely amazing! Growing with PK, I have perfected my technique and joined a group of talented and dedicated practitioners with whom I took the practice of this sport to the next level, which was transforming it into a lifestyle. PK is not a competitive sport, but more likely a sport of creativity and reinterpretation of one's environment from the perspective concerning discipline and the art of movement by only using the human body. As such, talent, dedication, creativity and ambition are required to successfully practice PK and ours did not remain unnoticed, hence being sponsored by a company in our home town. In addition, we were invited to five TV shows, where we talked about our passion and promoted PK amongst those willing to experience it. Having dedicated almost my entire life to this sport, I would like to make its magic known to others as well, therefore my dream being to become a PK or FREERUNNING instructor. Despite the fact that I really wished to make this happen in Romania, the critical economic situation of my country determined me to postpone the fulfilment of my dream and come to London for a more rewarding lifestyle. Like the majority of Romanian nationals, I started working as a construction worker in order to support myself financially. However, I did not abandon my dream and I kept searching for people with similar interests as mine as far as PK was concerned. This is how I discovered PARKOUR UK, the National Governing Body of this discipline. I joined them and now I am a member of their resourceful team. In order to complete the scenery of my professional activity, I will briefly describe PARKOUR UK. "

Established by some of the most experienced practitioners and coaches of

the discipline of PARKOUR/ FREERUNNING in the world and the City of Westminster, PARKOUR UK is the National Governing Body for the rapidly growing discipline and works in partnership with various organisations and other agencies to develop and spread PARKOUR across the UK" (PARKOUR UK 2013). A valuable member of the Sport and Recreation Alliance, PARKOUR UK collaborates with the Association for Physical Education (AFPE) and the Youth Sports Trust (YST), being supported by Sports Coach UK and awarded by 1st4sport Qualifications (idem). As further mentioned by this source, PARKOUR UK's main goals are to support and develop PK and FREERUNNING in the UK, as well as make this sport accessible to those interested in practising it at all levels. By linking my so far outlined personal and professional profiles to the Honey and Mumford (1992) learning styles inventory, I have identified myself as an activist. Consequently, I am " an enthusiast who will try anything" (Tutor Support Materials, Activity Sheet 3), hence the passion for extreme sports. Moreover, I am the type of person " who enjoys challenges and prefers being the centre of attention" (idem), this emphasizing again my preference towards the unusual in its extreme form. In addition, according to the learning styles inventory, I love working with others, i. e. my team members, whom I find inspirational. Furthermore, I get bored easily, thus constantly trying to challenge myself and surpass my limits, and " I do not always put enough thought into something before starting" (idem), but rather while I am performing. Furthermore, " I learn well when I am presented with challenging activities, when working with others, given responsibility, being under pressure and perceived as the centre of attention" (idem). After identifying myself as an activist and describing

myself as such, I will further examine the benefits of self-managed learning to me and PARKOUR UK, on a personal and respectively organizational level, and evaluate its various approaches towards the two parties involved. Firstly, I will define self-managed learning from Gibbons and Knowles' perspective and then apply these definitions to my professional experience. As such, according to Gibbons (2002), self-managed learning (SML), also known as self-directed learning (SDL), " is any increase in knowledge, skill, accomplishment, or personal development that an individual selects and brings about by his or her own efforts using any method in any circumstances at any time" (Self-Directed Learning 2011). Moreover, from Knowles' perspective, SDL is " a process by which individuals take the initiative, with or without the assistance of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes" (idem). Transposing these two SDL definitions into practice, I embarked on a learning experience that I had taken complete responsibility for, both in terms of unfolding and completion, by increasing my knowledge, skills, accomplishments, and ultimately personal development in PK through the adoption of a series of learning strategies, such as observation and analysis – observing my elder brother practice the sport and analysing the aesthetic nature of his movements, as well as his concentration – practice – starting to practise the sport myself – comprehension – understanding the harmony between personal endeavour and team work – constantly collaborating with my team, exchanging ideas, sharing PK experiences and challenging each other, thus discovering the

essence of PK, and eventually – evaluation – evaluating my progress in the practice of PK. Reviewing my experience in relation to SDL, I have identified numerous benefits of self-managed learning towards me. Hence, SDL " increased my awareness on the responsibility of making learning meaningful and monitoring my progress" (Garrison 1997). Moreover, " it increased my curiosity and will to try new things" (Lyman 1997), as it determined me to perceive issues as challenges, rather than obstructions, and turn learning into an enjoyable experience (Taylor 1995). In addition, SDL made me goal-oriented and motivated, it self-disciplined me and increased my motivation, it made me more independent and confident, as well as persistent and determined (idem). I have also become a more effective learner and I managed to develop my own leadership pattern (Morrow, et al. 1993). Furthermore, I found SDL compatible with my activist learning style and extremely useful in practice. As such, by developing my SDL skills, I increased my confidence and I became more able to solve problems on my own (Guglielmino & Murdick 1997). Yet, SDL is not only beneficial to me as individual, but also to PARKOUR UK as organization. By nature, PARKOUR UK is a learning organization, in the sense that it " promotes, rewards, and captures individual learning for its own benefit" (Beitler 2003). In other words, PARKOUR UK promotes SDL amongst its employees in order to gain more knowledgeable, skilled and qualified personnel. Moreover, SDL is beneficial to PARKOUR UK due to its compatibility with traditional training programmes and the minimal expenses of its implementation, as presented by Self-Directed Learning (2012). Referring to the evaluation of SDL approaches, I will present the ones that I have commonly adopted within the

process of self-managed learning. In my view, the most accessible SDL tool is the Internet. It aided me in doing research on the status of PARKOUR in the UK, as well as in identifying the National Governing Body for this discipline. Moreover, I established contact with PARKOUR UK through the Internet and this ultimately led to my acceptance in their team. Furthermore, the Internet provided me with access for the latest news and events related to PARKOUR both on the UK territory and worldwide, hence keeping me constantly updated in terms of my field of interest. I consider that another useful and accessible SDL tool is represented by social networking, which helps me maintain contact with the organization I am presently employed by outside office hours. In addition to all the aspects that I have presented in relation to SDL, it could also be described as a means of encouraging lifelong learning within the context of personal and professional development. The PARKOUR related self-managed learning helped me build self-improvement, revealing my physical and mental limits on the one hand, and the possibility to overcome them on the other hand. More, SDL prepared me to be extremely effective and by all means functional regardless of the environment I found myself into, thus offering me a great deal of flexibility and the opportunity to maximize my efficiency at all levels. In addition, SDL had a major contribution in building and maintaining my confidence, discipline, determination, and responsibility for my own actions, therefore helping me acquire a whole new set of skills and knowledge suitable for my work place. Considering all these points, SDL encourages my lifelong learning by providing me with the skills and experience required by my profession. Another means to encourage lifelong learning within the context of personal

and professional development is represented by the SWOT analysis, which makes me aware of my strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, thus providing me with the critical ability to evaluate myself in all aspects of my personal and professional development.

STRENGTHS

WEAKNESSES

OPPORTUNITIES

THREATS

1. AmbitiousNaiveLearning from the most experienced PK practitionersPoor communication skills2. ConfidentImpatientBecoming a PK instructor3. CourageousPromoting PK in the UK4. DeterminedTeaching PK to those interested5. DisciplinedFulfilling my life-long dream6. EffectivePerfecting my PK technique7. FlexibleOpening my own PK training centre8. FunctionalFurther Education9. Goal-orientated10. Responsible(Table 1)

The interpretation of my SWOT analysis emphasizes my poor communication skills as potential threat to my profession. Although in terms of practice and experience I am a valuable asset to the organization I am working for, I am concerned with regard to my poor communication skills and the negative influence they might have on my work performance. My level of spoken and written English is not that good, which is why I sometimes find it difficult to express my thoughts or opinions to colleagues, customers and supervisors. However, I am making considerable efforts to improve my language skills and I hope that I will be able to communicate easily soon. I have enrolled to several English courses and I am tutored by a Romanian national, bilingual in

Romanian and English. As such, I am expecting to go beyond this language

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barrier as soon as possible and fully enjoy the rewarding nature of my profession. Considering everything presented, I managed to demonstrate that I have a good knowledge and understanding of the personal and professional skills that are needed to promote staff and career development in an organizational environment, namely PARKOUR UK. Plus, I developed my ability to organize, manage and practice a range of approaches to improve my performance as self-directed learner in preparation for work and career development, hence achieving the required learning outcomes of this assignment.

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