

Review

Title

Critically examine the theories that underpin the process of personal development planning and the role of self-reflection.

Introduction

The review will focus on the theories that inform and contribute to the process of personal development planning (PDP) and how these theories encompass and relate to the personal aspect of self-reflection and progress.

What is the meaning of personal development planning.

The Quality Assurance Agency has defined personal development planning as

[A] structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performance and/or achievements and to plan for their personal, educational and career development.

What does the PDP process involve.

Personal development planning involves an individual going through a certain process of continually developing and refining skills and constantly reflecting upon their own learning experiences. PDP can be developed to support coincided with academic, personal and career progression. The process of PDP includes looking at you own progression, enables an individual to assess their skills and recording these achievements.

Record of Achievements (RoA) has an important role within PDP, as this profile/recording progress provides the means for students to improve their skills through RoA, it allows individuals to relate to the learning experiences, to review and reflect upon their learning experiences. This process gradually develops students to be aware of their skills, which initially gives them more confidence. This is achieved through reflecting and reviewing learning experiences that help students make targets and actions plans within profiling. By profiling it turns reflecting into a learning process, learning from experiences. The profiling process can be beneficial to the student as it allows them to think in what career path they would like to pursue in.

“Profiling can be used by a student to focus in on particular career options, or it can be employed as a device, within the workplace, for thinking about professional development.”

So not only does profiling help the individual whilst in Higher education but also gives an advantage in their career aspects of PDP.

Is PDP important?

PDP is of importance as it encourages an individual to reflect, review and set goals for themselves, this process helps an individual to develop their confidence and self awareness which is vital within the educational and work place settings.

Any theories underpinning the process of PDP?

These ideas and strategies, which contribute to PDP have been influenced and put into practice by theories from a wide rang of theoretical perspectives and approaches.

Theories and idea’s which will be looked at in this review are:

- Peter Honey and Alan Mumford’s Learning Styles.

- David Kolb
- Dewey
- Moon
- Illich
- Bently.

Theories that have contributed to PDP

Theories

Honey and Mumford

What have they said

Within their theory, Honey and Mumford had said that we, as individuals learn through different ways, for example we are not all passive learners, so we may not learn through that particular method of learning. They had categorised the learning styles into four main categories, so an individual was either one or the other.

These categories were:

- Activist

Activists are individuals, are active learners and enjoy challenges and being involved when learning something.

They tend to learn effectively and with enthusiasm when they are involved and taking part in something. However activists turn off and lose interests in learning when they are not actively involved and are being taught passively.

- Theorist

Theorists are those who always want to know how things go together within a logical structure. They like to use theories in order to get their views across to others and to relate situations and ideas to the theoretical side of things.

They use theories to understand things and put theory into practice in situations. Theorists tend to mistrust claims or views, which have doubts or a weak foundation to it. Also they find it hard to learn when they cannot look into depth in something or relate it to theory.

- Pragmatist

These individuals learn through putting theory into practice, enjoy the practical side of learning. They like proving the theory, for instance testing out something based on the theoretical perspective and seeing how that incorporates within the practical framework.

Also they may switch off from learning if they cannot see why they are doing something or for what purpose it is that they are doing something.

- Reflector

The reflectors seem to learn from their experiences, always thinking off how this could be done or what ifs and then putting these into their learning. Taking time when thinking things through and always making use of time. Also reflectors find it hard to cope with when running out of time, for example when trying to meet a deadline.

Honey and Mumford suggested that to find out which category of learning styles a person falls into they would have to complete a number of statements, where in the end of the questioner you will be able to indicate which type of learner you are.

How is this related to PDP

Honey and Mumford's theory of learning styles is linked to PDP, as it focuses on individuals and how a individual can develop their skills through knowing what type of learner they are and most importantly how knowing how they can learn best and what are the best ways to learn. The learning styles can indicate an individuals strengths and weaknesses. By knowing how you learn best can have a huge impact on PDP. As you can plan and reflect upon yourself and see if you really are a theorist or a reflector and what makes you like this, so this is a type of reflection and also how from knowing how you learn can help you progress and develop your skills.

How effective is it to PDP and own development

Looking at these learning styles from a personal perspective, I myself had completed the learning styles questioner and discovered that I was a Theorist. This has been beneficial towards myself and PDP as at first when I read what it takes to be a theorist, that I could relate to that and I felt that that was my learning style, learning through wanting to know about the theories behind anything for solid proof.

Has it been useful?

However when I read up the other three learning styles I thought I was a bit of all of them put together. I know that I learn through reflection and I like to take time out and analyse what has happened and also that I find it extremely hard to work when I have a limited amount of time. So I feel that I am limited to a certain extent if I say that I am a theorist because that is not completely true as I have the characteristics for the reflector style of learning as well.

Any other links to other theories?

The learning style theory was partially based on Kolb's learning cycle and adapted from the four main stages within Kolb's learning cycle.

David Kolb's

- Kolb
- Dewey
- Moon
- Illich
- bently
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Conclusion

Which theory overall has been most effective when considering my own learning why should we include PDP in our degree

is it useful?