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ABSTRACT

This report aims to identify and explain the differences between beliefs, values and attitudes, making use of a theoretical model within an organisation. It will describe how beliefs, values and attitudes is a contributory factor to an individual's behaviour at the workplace, with emphasis on my behaviour at my workplace. Barnardo's Charity will be the organisation whose management theory will be identified and evaluated with evidence as a former employee by critically assessing my own beliefs, values and attitudes. This report will also provide an understanding of different management theories, specifically in the retail sector at Barnardo's Charity organisation, linking my role to their relevance.

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this report is to identify and discuss critical thinking in the workplace sighting my past work experiences. It will be discussing my role as a retail branch manager, the relevance of the chosen management theories, my beliefs, values and attitudes.

There will be a demonstration of the application of an appropriate level of my workplace critical thinking generally and specifically regarding the organisation where I was employed in the past.

In addition, there will be an understanding of our belief systems, value systems and our attitudes relating to the workplace and also explain the differences between beliefs, values and attitudes and how it may affect our behaviour at work.

Different organisations operate differently depending on the management system adopted and this needs to be understood. George Bernard Shaw said "Progress is impossible without change and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything"

BACKGROUND TO TASK

Brief information about my chosen organisation (Barnardo's Charity):

Barnardo's was founded in 1867 by Thomas John Barnado who was training as a medical doctor before abandoning his medical training to set up homes for poverty stricken children as a result of cholera epidemic which left over 3000 people dead and children orphaned. He opened his first home for boys in 1870 and by 1900, had over 65 cottages, a school, a church, a hospital and was providing training for over 1500 girls as well at Barkingside in London where the head office is currently.

Barnardos believe in children no matter who they are or their life experiences by giving support to vulnerable, abused and forgotten children by providing support to bring out the best in every child (Claremont team, 2015). Also, stated Barnardo's vision as "The lives of all children and young people should be free from abuse, discrimination and poverty and their purpose is to help UK's most vulnerable children and young people reach their full potential thereby transforming their lives". Barnardo's as a charity organisation is funded by donations which includes gifts and wills, grants and fees, investments and properties and also their retail shops.

This report will be using the retail shops as my case study because of my experience as a branch manager in one of their retail outlets for about 3 years. It is reported on Barnardo's website that there are about 600 retail shops all over the UK, where donated items by the public like clothing, accessories, electricals, homeware, books and other bric-a-brac are sold back to the public. These shops are staffed by paid employees and volunteers (Barnardo's, 2019).

Understanding Critical Thinking (CT):

Critical Thinking (CT) has been defined in many different ways according to the context in which it has been understood. According to Maund, A. (2018), Psychologist Robert Sternberg defined CT as "the mental processes, strategies, and representations people use to solve problems, make decisions, and learn new concepts", whilst Education Professor

Michael Scriven and Philosopher Richard Paul defined CT as “The intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualising and or evaluating information gathered from or generated by observation, experience, reflection, reasoning or communication, as a guide to belief and action.” Taking both definitions into context, there are similarities in them and this signifies that CT is focused on developing an individual’s thought process regarding all aspects of life, be it academically or life experiences in general. It encourages people to question assumptions, discussions or arguments with flaws, also question impulsive generalisations, pronouncements without proper research and evidence and inconclusive concepts disguised as truths (Maund, A. (2018).

Critical Thinking is in summary a thought process not an outcome, an actively positive and productive activity that develops self confidence, asks what, how and why with emphasis laid more on ‘why’. By CT being a thought process makes it a deliberate act of taking intentional steps at the highest quality level. Therefore, Critical thinking should be encouraged more and be ingrained into the learning process from the early stages of education so that by the time people progress into the workplace or their careers, their CT abilities are heightened, they ask questions rather than accept the norms and they become more politically informed thereby adding to creating a balanced economy in the country, especially in times of change. Our understanding of the world is determined through thinking as that is how the human brain works.

It is worthy of note that as CT is triggered by positive occurrences, it can also be triggered by negative events such as trauma, assumptions from the past, irrational emotions and previously accepted negative values and behaviours. Translating that into critical thinking, we take deliberate steps to think at the highest level quality. This leads to the connection of critical thinking to beliefs, values and attitudes.

Understanding Beliefs, Values and Attitudes:

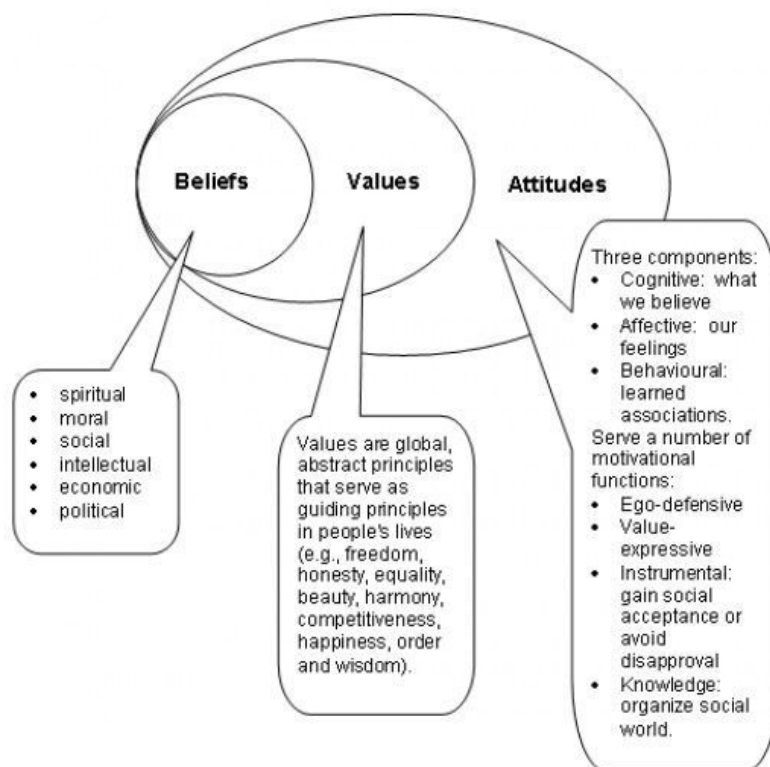
Beliefs are feelings that are proven or unproven to be true (Anderson and De Silva, 2009). For instance, believing that when people die, they either

go to heaven or hell is a belief because holding that statement as truth may evolve from one's culture, religion, background and even education.

Values are evaluation of one's worth and the significance attached to an object or to existence (Anderson and De Silva, 2009). People make life choices based on their values and this stems from their long-lasting beliefs, what they hold as important in life. This in effect dictates people's attitude and behaviour.

Attitudes as defined by Anderson and De Silva, (2009) "Is the way a person expresses or applies their beliefs and values, and is expressed through words and behaviour". In other words, an individual's attitude is affected by or depends on their beliefs and values and this is manifested in their behaviour towards other people, or shown in different circumstances.

Fig 1.1 (Theoretical Model)
Beliefs, Values and Attitudes



(Owlcation 2019)

As the above model indicates, beliefs, values and attitudes are interlinked because one does not exist without the other, as much as there are differences in their meaning. It demonstrates that our beliefs are shaped by the world around us which is guided by religion/spirituality, our morals, social background, economic and political environment. These in turn leads to what we value in life, things that are important to us, our passionate views whether emotions or trivial feelings and what feels right to us. In all these, our attitude is formed and could be positive or negative.

Critically, attitude is an important factor in the elements as it is a reflection of our values and beliefs illustrated in the model above. As pointed out by Rokeach (1970), he stated that “Attitude is a learned predisposition to respond favourably or unfavorably towards a person, place or event”. Our attitude determines our energy, how we respond to positive or negative aspects of life and our behaviour and in such instances, we sometimes cannot control our behaviour. So we can accept that attitude determines our relationships with other people socially or at our workplace. In the workplace however, attitudes can be deemed to be acceptable or not depending on the culture of the workplace. Our attitude has a great impact on our feelings, relationships and actions at work in the sense that our productivity is affected by our attitudes as well. We therefore can agree here, that positive mental attitude is a familiar attribute of a successful person and as quoted by Satir, V. (2018) “Life is not what it’s supposed to be. It’s what it is. The way you cope with it is what makes the difference”.

Thereby, beliefs and values leads to the development of attitudes which guides our behaviour. On the other hand, even if an individual has been shaped by some negative past experiences formed by their beliefs, new attitudes which are positive can evolve from learned values which eliminates past beliefs. This could be as a result of workplace training and development.

RELEVANCE AND APPLICATION OF WORKPLACE CRITICAL THINKING

Management Theory:

Firstly, an understanding of Management theory used by organisations is needed in this report. The origin of management theory stems from the '**Bureaucratic Theory**' and the '**Scientific Theory**'. According to Markgraf (2017), these two theories made use of measurements, procedures and routines as the foundation for their operation. This is evident in how workplaces grow in their hierarchies, following a set of principles to manage actions as they are then able to penalise workers not following those rules and regulations. He also pointed out that some workplaces have now evolved into using what is now known as the Contemporary management theories which are '**Systems Theory**', '**Contingency Theory**' and '**Human Relations Theory**' where employees are now becoming an important part of the organisation.

A brilliant quality of service and productivity is achieved with the aid of management theories in workplaces and most managers or head of departments utilise not one but a couple of the theory as long as it works and suits their culture. As management theories evolve as mentioned earlier from the authoritative and bureaucratic authority, to organisations focusing more on their employees, a corporate culture emerges and it is evident that this culture enhances and contributes to more productivity from employees.

In addition to further understanding how organisations and workplaces function with different management theories, Markgraf (2017) distinguishes the 5 theories in managing actions in the following way:

- Bureaucratic Management Theory rests on the principle of a perfect bureaucracy.
- Scientific Management Theory depends on a scientific method instead of depending on brilliant leader of the industry.
- Systems Theory accepts the differences in employees and how the organisation system affects them.

- Contingency Theory manage actions depending on aspects that is of importance in the ongoing situation.
- Human Resources Theory manage actions by recognising team-work, group dynamics and social systems.

My role in Barnardo's Charity Retail Shop:

At the beginning, I was employed as a sales consultant in a newly opened outlet in one of the biggest shopping centres in Essex, UK. This came to be after a few years gap in my employment and self-employment career due to personal challenges. I was able to quickly learn, understand and display Barnardo's work ethics. I was then retained as a 'roving' ambassador for other shops experiencing problems, to troubleshoot because my shop had to close down due to 'bureaucracy' from the senior management of the shopping centre, while other staff and volunteers had to be let go. As soon as the position of a branch manager became available, I was offered the job and spent 3 years in the position before moving on.

As a branch retail manager (BRM) at one of the influential parts of London and in a store that used to generate a large revenue for the company but was failing, I immediately realised the challenge on my hands and relished it. Being a fairly large store, I had a deputy retail branch manager (DBRM) and volunteers as most Barnardo's shops only have branch manager and volunteers as staff members. It is reported on the Barnardo's website (2019), that there is a team of over 1160 employees and over 8500 volunteers in the shops and there are also a support team at the head office whose jobs are to manage Gift aid, Volunteer recruitment, Marketing, Finance, and Recycling.

My role as the BRM was to consistently achieve profit by managing staff, volunteers and resources provided within a certain budget whilst providing quality service to customers and donors in order to support the main objective of Barnardo's which is Child care work. Also, paramount is achieving the organisation's objectives by maintaining effective working relationships with my staff, volunteers, the community and having a positive atmosphere in the shop.

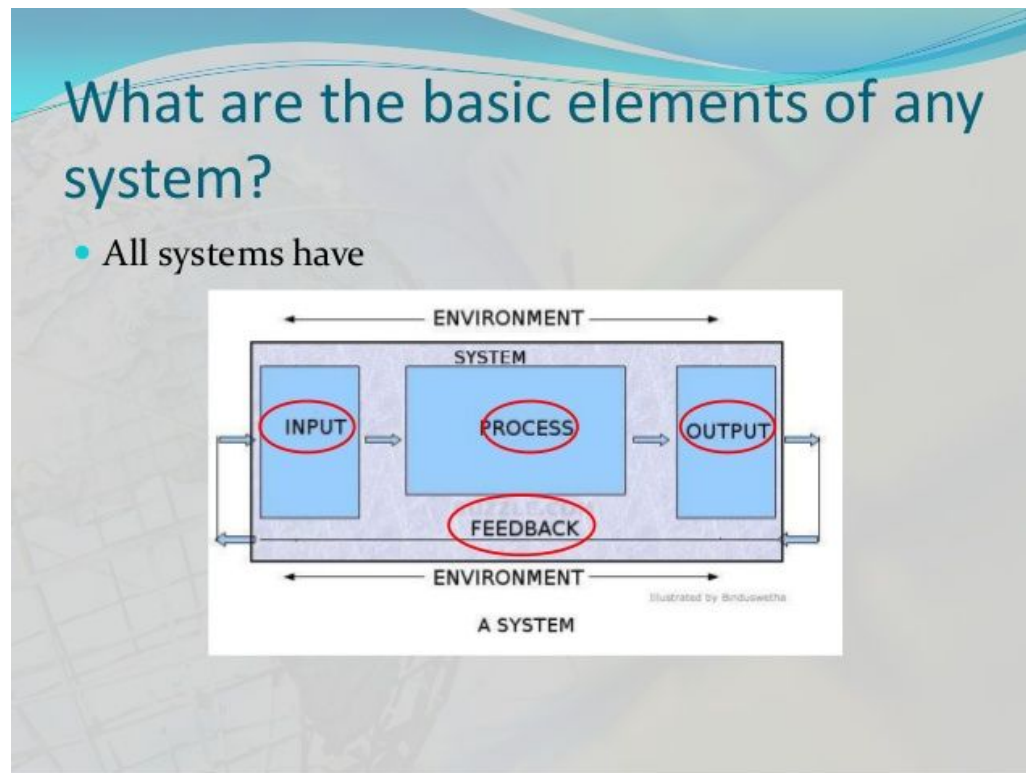
Management Theories relevant to my role:

The management theories relevant to my role are found in the contemporary theories which are Systems Theory, Contingency Theory and Human relations theory because these theories place importance on the entire organisation, staff and volunteers included. Evidently, Barnardo's core values and principles are based on respect, diversity, passion and success, innovation, continued improvement and training for staff and volunteers (Webster, 2011). In order for these goals to be achieved, more funds need to be raised, and as that happens, there has to be a difference in how the money is utilised. Reported in Barnardo's annual report for 2018-2019, the aim three years ago was to double the net fundraising and retail income from £23m to £50m by 2025 and the increase is already being achieved by 16% to over £26m currently.

The relevance of **Systems Theory** is evident in Barnardo's by firstly understanding the theory itself. This theory was first suggested by the biologist Ludwig Von Bertalanffy in 1940 when he reacted against reductionism and Ross Ashby moved it forward in 1964 (Chaudhary, 2014). The goal was to transform the system formation, restrictions, position and also explain the purpose and methods applicable at all levels so that an optimised equifinality can be achieved (Bevan, 2006). Different systems are in existence in all facets of society, be it social, structural, information and functional systems. Chaudhury also stated that "A systems theory views an organization as an organism made up of numerous parts (subsystems) that must work together in harmony for the larger system to function effectively". The retail sector of Barnardo's is one of the subsystems which works in harmony with the other departments like fundraising, child protection and development.

There are 2 types of systems which are closed system where there is no interaction with the environment and the open system where there is interaction with the environment and is self regulating.

Fig 2.1 Basic elements of a Systems theory



(slideshare)

The above illustration shows the theory consisting of interrelated segments through process, inputs are turned into outputs within the boundaries and still interact with the environment outside the boundaries.

My key responsibilities as a BRM at Barnardo's came under Leadership, Team building and attainment of results. As the leader, my role was in recruiting, training and development of volunteers and paid staff, in congruent with the organisation's policies and procedures. There was planning, prioritising duties, delegating and supervising all staff, and also monitoring and reviewing the ever present workload in the branch, also conforming to policies and procedures. In team Building, I had to create a conducive working environment for paid and unpaid staff and some volunteers are sometimes school children (from age 17 and above) who are volunteering for work experience. This sometimes proved difficult because different volunteers fall into different categories of training

expectations and duties. To consistently achieve financial targets and good results, I had to work closely with the Area Business Manager (ABM) to plan and discuss the method, implementation and review of the business which sometimes proved challenging to gain her attention because of the large area she covers. The workload was heavy and this consists of acquiring stock by donation from the public, sorting stock, sales analysis, conducting SWOT analysis to determine strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the business.

Fig 2.2 (Sample SWOT analysis for my shop)

Strengths Location: Shop is located in an affluent area in London and situated directly opposite a major train station attracting footfall of people. Individuality: The shop stands out from other charity shops on the high street due to the excellent window display. Capable management: staff, volunteers and community believes in shop managers because of the happy and engaging atmosphere.	Weaknesses Resources: Insufficient new items amongst stock and budget for volunteer's refreshment is low. Staffing: Sometimes there is insufficient volunteers to cover trading hours.
Opportunities Growth: Area is growing due to more people moving into the area and discovering value for money in charity shops.	Threats Competition: There are two other charity shops on the high street. Shoplifting: Shoplifters having access to the shop as no security facility because it cannot be afforded.

The illustration above shows the internal and external influences on the success of the shop and it normally is compiled together with members of staff and volunteers for broader perspective. I can however argue that though Systems Theory is goal oriented and engage in feedback in order to meet Organisation's goals (Choudhury, 2014), there is sometimes nothing that can be done about the obvious weaknesses for my shop because of low resources and dependence on volunteer staff even after feedback has been given to the area manager which defeats the purpose of the SWOT analysis.

I also understand that because managers should exercise a higher level of thinking and reasoning in order to act upon bigger demands and accountability because critical thinking and forward thinking managers find it easy to adjust to their changing environment and are more prepared to develop and accept change through innovation (Unknown, 2017).

This is evident during my time at Barnardo's from acquiring a storage unit at no cost to the shop and organisation in order to keep and save the already overflowing storage in the shop due to the higher volume of donations. As a result of this, we never ran out of quality stock for replenishing the shop floor.

As mentioned above, the Contingency theory was also relevant to my role as the BRM where my actions were based on the situation being dealt with at the current time. As there is no one way to lead your team because of all the internal and external restrictions, the best course of action has to depend on the situation. As a result of this, most times my Area Business Manager always apologise for not visiting my store as frequently as she does other stores because she knows my store was on top of most situations and my staff are happy. They know that they are valued by their involvement in the successful running of the store and it shows in our daily takings.

Critical Assessment of my own beliefs, values and attitude at my workplace:

People's attitude drives their energy, how they respond to situations in life and their behaviour. My attitude to life in general has always been positive and to look on the bright side of life even during challenges and heartache. I would always try and find the solution because my belief is that there are always solutions to any problem even if the solution is to walk away. My beliefs and values are based on my spiritual and moral and intellectual upbringing. In essence my beliefs have shaped my principles where wisdom, honesty, equality, and a harmonious relationship are important to me. It is understandable that some of my colleagues hold different beliefs and values, I do try to create an environment where their views are listened to and valued.

I totally understand that situations arise at work where my beliefs and values are challenged by the actions of others whether paid staff, volunteers and customers however, my attitude has always been to try and be inclusive and put myself into people's shoes, trying to understand where they are coming from.

Having said all of that, my natural response to situations is to be who I am and be guided by my beliefs and values, I then realise there has to be a level of trust as well.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there is a relevance in critical thinking in contemporary organisations. For organisations to survive in a changing environment, there must be an adaptable system guiding their existence in the business world. Workplaces must be able to change and adapt quickly within their system and when situations arise where there are problems, decisions need to be made. Though the overall structure of the organisation plays an important role in an employee's decision making process, their participation is based on their position in the organisation (Doyle, 2018). Critical thinking

is a productive and positive activity to help people understand other humans, workplaces and their culture.

It is recognised also that management theories enhances productivity in workplaces and that all evolved from Bureaucratic management theory. Contemporary organisation have evolved from the autocratic methods of bureaucracy and are adapting human relation theory, contingency theory and systems theory.

Furthermore, our beliefs, values and attitudes, Milton Rokeach summarises their interdependence and impact by the illustration below.

Fig 3.1

Attitudes, Values, and Beliefs

- ▶ Milton Rokeach developed a theory about human behavior, attitude, and attitude change.
- ▶ In this theory, beliefs are the fundamental building blocks of attitudes.
 - Attitudes toward objects
 - Attitudes toward situations
- ▶ Core beliefs are values that function as life guides.
- ▶ A collection of beliefs organized around a focal point like an issue, event, or person constitute an attitude.



(slide share)

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