



Skills for the Workplace

Module Assignment Submission

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Developing Workplace Critical Thinking

By David Ojugo

Introduction:

The focus of this essay is to examine ways in which critical thinking can be developed in the workplace. The author will explore different methods and theories used to establish what several scholars have said “is the lifeblood of most essential workplace skills (Laws, 2003). Watson-Glaser in 1925 invented a critical thinking test enhanced on the foundation of Pearson’s RED critical thinking model, which lists the skills that are needed in critical thinking, and how to develop them. The “R” represents to recognize assumptions while the “E” represents evaluating arguments and the “D” to draw on conclusions.

Nummedal and Halpern (1995) describes critical thinking as an ongoing process not an outcome, which can be developed over time. The purpose of this thesis is to critically review how values, beliefs, attitudes and emotions play a big role, not confined to just the workplace but your everyday walk of life. The author will evaluate various different management styles and present a study in which a case of constructive dismissal/ harassment arose. The debate is wide ranging, and will review how logical reasoning using inductive and deductive skills can be a useful tool for managers and employees. The research will attempt to clarify and reflect on what outcomes could have resulted differently. Laws (2003) explains that not all the time critical examinations will have the same outcome, as conflicts in interest will occur. However, Laws (2003) further explains that this mismatch in information gathered when analysed, critically and effectively will lead to a level of common sense, Adair (1969) and Brabandere (2013) reports knowing how to critically think outside the box is important, as not everyone will see things from the same perspective.

Collective thinking has helped to modify and update legal policies governing employment, such as in paternal/parental leave. Through Parliament, Trade Unions and pressure groups have played a key role to ensure these revised policies, fit into modern day times and practices, for example, paternal/parental leave (Addati, et al 2014). It has been noted over the years that this policy has been updated to reflect modern day work patterns. An increasing number of employers are recognizing that sometimes the higher earner is the mother who wishes to return to work, and have allowed the parental leave to shift to the father of the child or shared parental leave (ACAS: Shared Parental Leave, 2015). These parental policies are guidance documents, and some have argued that government should

step in to ensure a uniformed and fair process is adopted throughout the country by all employers (Equality Act 2010).

In the modern day era, using critical thinking skills is key, not to say old methods of how to lead and think are not effective, and are still widely used (Argyris,1970). However, it is imperative to think differently as this drives behavior and behavior drives results. It is evident to see the world is evolving at speeds far quicker than a locomotive (Watson-Glaser 1925 and Bell, 2010).

Background to Incident Case Study:

This is a case of harassment and bullying which lead to constructive dismissal (Ojugo, 2017) The Employee reports to the senior manager who manages a large team of twenty staff, for the purpose of this essay the senior manager will be referred to as The Employer. The Employee manages a small team of five staff.

The Employer had recommended The Employee for a promotion. This was agreed verbally with The Employee during their one to one meetings. Also during the one to one sessions The Employee recommended a member of their team be put forward for promotion, The Employer agreed. Company policy dictates all staff members with line management responsibilities, are required to have regular team meetings, and one to one meetings with each member of staff within their teams. The Employer held the team meetings weekly and one to one meetings every two to three weeks, whereas, The Employee held team and one to one meetings on a weekly basis. Furthermore, company policy states that in order to initiate promotion of any staff member, the line manager of the said staff member would need to complete a supporting statement as part of the application, which would then be submitted to Human Resources. This process can take any time from one to three months. Hence, The Employer is fundamental to The Employee's promotion, as it clearly shows support from The Employer.

It so happens the paperwork for The Employee's team member had been completed and had already been submitted to Human Resources and approved within a week. However, the paperwork for The Employee's promotion was not yet completed. This was a managerial promotion, the same level as The Employer, and therefore further documents would be

required, but would not be ready for another week. Once received the application would then be submitted to Human Resources.

The Incident Case Study:

According to The Employee a few days prior to the date agreed to check and submit the final documents, during the usual one to one sessions, one of The Employee's team members had to suddenly take time off work due to her father's ongoing fight with cancer, whose condition rapidly took a turn for the worse and he died within two days. Sickness and absent policies require staff and workers to report in daily, however, it does allow for discretion. The Employer asked The Employee to contact her team member to ask her when she was coming back to work. The Employee felt it was way too soon to ask, and suggested to The Employer to wait and show some empathy, otherwise it could be seen as harassment. The Employer accepted this but was clearly not happy about it. The following day The Employer noticed the team member who had lost her father was not present at work, and asked The Employee again, if the team member had reported in, if not to contact her and find out when she is returning to work. The Employee felt quite uncomfortable to carry out the request, it was a Thursday, and replied "waiting till Monday would be more appropriate under the circumstances". This led to The Employer shouting "you must do as I ask otherwise I will report you for insubordination, this is a first warning". This took place in the corridor in the presence of a few members of staff some of which were The Employee's team members. The incident was rather humiliating and left The Employee feeling very embarrassed. The Employee was concerned, and was advised by colleagues to contact Human Resources. The Employee decided not to.

The Employer used a bureaucratic style of management, which became more pronounced, subsequently, leading to further bullying and subjugation of The Employee and to a lesser extent the other employees on a regular basis. The Employer began making unreasonable demands for reports at the weekly team meetings. The Employee recalls another particular incident, The Employee is a proud Nigerian and Arsenal fan which the whole team were well aware of. Every Friday was dress down day and The Employee would often use his Arsenal jerseys or traditional Nigerian tops to work. However, not taking too much notice at the time but on reflection some derogatory comments were made by The Employer, in relation

to Nigeria as a whole, in hindsight now looking back can be deemed as discriminative/predjudice/vindictive behaviour. By trying and succeeding in making The Employee feel uncomfortable wearing his clothes. The bullying began having an adverse effect on team morale, resulting in a notable high staff turn-over, over the next few months.

On hindsight, these elements were overlooked, minimized, neglected, dismissed and were deemed not to be of any significance at the time by The Employer, Employee, the other employees in the Team and Human Resources. In order for progression to occur, the mindset and the way we think must change, without the change it is literally impossible to do anything (Shaw, 2016). Similarly, it has been stated by the world's first professor of leadership studies (arguably), that to succeed you must read as most leaders are readers, which will enhance and develop the brain to be more open to change in the now and the future (Adair, 1973). Harasym (2008) explains neuroplasticity is something good critical thinkers can apply, being able to reorganize the brain to tackle problems, and logically think of the best solutions. Basically, ignoring the issue and hoping it would go away did not work and should and could have been dealt with.

A number of incidents occurred since agreeing the promotion, one of which was the passing away of The Employees Uncle back in Nigeria.

As already indicated above, the conditions in the workplace became strained, The Employee approached Human Resources Management (HR) for advice and support, who suggested The Employee raise the issue in the next regular one-to-one meeting with The Employer alone or with HR present, that maybe The Employer is unaware of their actions and impact on their staff, and stop. The Employee eventually decided to do so alone in the following one-to-one meeting, and gave specific examples, such as shouting at The Employee in the corridor on more than one occasion, in the presence of other colleagues, giving a verbal warning for no good reason, also going on about tasks not completed despite reasonable explanation. And more importantly not completing the promotion paperwork. The Employer denied the allegations, and instead stated, The Employee was too sensitive and decided that the promotion was not tenable at present and would be reviewed at a later date.

The Employee had a bereavement within the family, subsequently leading to The Employee having to travel to Nigeria, for the burial ceremony; despite The Employer being fully aware of the decision to travel, denies the allegations and also denies the ultimatum that “if you travel you will not have a job to come back too”. The Employee, openly told Human Resources about the ultimatum that The Employer had said prior to The Employee leaving to Nigeria. The situation worsened, when The Employee returned from Nigeria the one-to-one meetings became hostile and aggressive – The Employee became the main target of humiliation in the team meetings, also The Employee was excluded from the senior team and strategic meetings. It was affecting The Employee’s personal life – The Employee became insomniac and stressed. It was now evident the threat made by The Employer about not having a job to come back too was a plan in progress, trying by all means to push The Employee out. The Employee asked for Human Resources to join the next one-to-one meeting which was held at the end of the day, and the issue was raised again, and again The Employer denied the allegations. Within a fortnight of returning from Nigeria, The Employee was contacted by Human Resources to urgently attend a meeting alone and given a proposal by The Employer not to return to work, with a settlement. Human Resources advised The Employee to seek legal advice during this time away from work before making a decision. The Employee retained a solicitor and spoke to the Union and (ACAS) The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, but after much consideration, decided to accept The Employer’s proposal, with a negotiated settlement, and conditions, such as, an agreed reference – this is constructive dismissal. The Employer claims The Employee left with no permission granted, basically claiming The Employee went AWOL absent without leave. Human Resources can back up The Employee, as The Employee was willing and took unpaid leave. The Employer did not grant compassionate leave, to The Employee, the reasons given were the person who has passed away is not your parent therefore your Uncle does not qualify, also threatening to sack The Employee if they travel, under such conditions some would suggest to part company albeit amicably, however, assuming The Employee took it further as in to court it would suggest a battle in court which can end up costing thousands of pounds.

Inherent in this conception is the understanding that when given a managerial role being able to think rationally as opposed to emotionally is vital, based essentially on the argument

outlined above rational discourse was not maintained by the Employee as emotions played a big part in several decisions Fancy (2003) and Habermas (1984) being able to effectively communicate without allowing emotions to manifest.

Mosse, (1979) reports Bolshevik values and beliefs were deemed the norm at that time, subordinates remained so and answer to authority, however in this day and age such stances are no longer deemed as acceptable (Figs, 1989). However, apparatchik attitudes have survived, by adopting a civil approach being able to think critically, nevertheless they will still be labelled as having a bureaucratic approach to work Dmitriev (2018) Mead (2014) Kappeler (2014) Elder (2012) and Walters (2014).

Analysis of Beliefs, Values, Attitudes, and Behaviour - Perceptions working in Tandem:

By applying these skills can only help benefit the organisation and the persons in question. Many times the phrase “stop jumping to conclusions” it is a statement used the world over. The reason being what someone believes to be true may not actually be true, as it is yet to be proven (Anderson & De Silva, 2009). Due to having a biased opinion in the way of thinking, as opposed to critically thinking an assumption is made, (Voss, et al, 1991) This can be argued the way in which your raised, tends to form a lot of what you believe in, so by way of reasoning if you are a good at it, generally it is believed you can excel (Segal,1991).

In Nigeria burial ceremonies can be as big in fact even bigger than weddings and christenings most especially if it is a Traditional High Chief. The importance of The Employee going to pay his last respects for the Uncle could not be questioned these are values embedded within. The belief however of The Employer was no leave no time off, perhaps due to the strain on the relationship between the colleagues has brought The Employer trying to instil strict authority, which The Employee was not conforming too. Conformity enables a team or an individual to re-evaluate their position despite not being favourable, however, circumstances can predict how one decides to conform or not. Conforming can be a good and bad thing, always agreeing can get you labelled as a yes man/woman, and to avoid speaking up and avoid conflict you agree. Knowing full well thinking critically the solution to the problem has not been dealt with to maximum effect. Although different authors have put different emphasis into their description, these events

if dealt with critically with better reasoning and understanding could have resulted in a different outcome.

Critically thinking possibly due to the strain of high staff turnover, low morale within the workforce, The Employee felt losing such an important member (Employee) of the team would at such a critical time be counter-productive looking from the organisations perspective Gventer et, al (2014) and Levinson (1965) When needed most you bail, however, this way of reasoning can come across as selfish and biased under the given circumstances, and most especially if it was a casual relationship as opposed to the workplace environment. In spite of these findings some theorists on the other hand can argue bereavement is something not to be taken lightly, by refusing to sanction compassionate leave; this can easily have a negative impact on all members of the team and these kind of problems can be easily avoided (Schine, 2006) Nevertheless, unpaid leave was an option discussed, as mentioned earlier and this option was taken by The Employee. However, this raises debates regarding using reasonable logic and the advantages and disadvantages of teaching and understanding what it is to think critically, not only is it an elementary part of life it is also a fundamental skill most successful organisations adapt to create harmony and find solutions (Mount et al, 2006). Using critical thinking will help to eradicate sociocentric bias, and the way in which people reason when being confronted with a problem; being able to apply various systematic approaches to tackle the problem and finding the right solution(s). Things happen for a reason however reasons equate to causes and not every cause is of equal importance. Knowing how and when to manage using critical thinking and problem solving skills is essential (Bell, 2010). Having values are important to succeed, although measuring the worth or importance of what you believe can determine what you value. These elements work in tandem with attitudes the way a person expresses or applies beliefs and values generally are expressed through words and behaviour. The attitude of The Employer was subjective as opposed to objective and objectivity is paramount for those in authority as thinking critically, enables the thinker to use a tolerant ambiguous approach for any problems that may arise, the process is ongoing and does not end constant evaluating is essential.

Principles of Logical Reasoning:

Logic consists of different types of reasoning, the main principles are concerned with the correct reasoning, drawing on this you can get your conclusion (Halpin, 2010). One of the highest forms of mental activity is having the ability to reason and reason well, as it is vitally important in all aspects of life (Voss et al, 1991). Having the ability to apply correct reasoning is extremely essential, as we now live in a rapidly changing technological society, complex issues are arising rapidly, having the ability to think quickly whilst simultaneously deciphering information rapidly across all levels is vitally important (Hagemann, 2017).

Inductive reasoning begins with an assumption which may or may not be true (Halpin,2010).

Using Logic:

Applying critical thinking when reasoning a situation before jumping to a conclusion is very important, for both Managers and staff (Bell,2010). The author explains that The Employer had a very bureaucratic approach to management in the incident and despite this being a solid theory of management in some circumstances this approach is now looked upon by scholars as outdated and subsequently the style has been reformed and tweaked to adapt in tomorrow's world Rezak (2004) Jantsch (1980) and Bell (2010). Ampliative reasoning/arguing is neither deductively valid or invalid as the conclusion amplifies upon the premise (Halpin,2010). Human Resources could and should have taken a deductive approach to the incident.

Learning to think critically and outside the box is a very useful skill, knowing when to take the most suitable corrective actions to analyse and adjust your approach to solving a problem (Senge, et al 1990). (Mullins, 2008) defines learning as a change of permanent kind, which may result in new behaviours or new understanding and knowledge gained through formal and informal processes, and through experiences encountered in life (Ojugo,2017).

Critical thinking according to (Halpern, 2013) is what is needed from leaders who are navigating the volatility of the "new normal". (Halpern, 2013) goes on to further to describe critical thinking as, applying cognitive skills or strategies, which in turn can help increase the probability of a desirable outcome. Using critical thinking strategies engaging the staff in decision making, using consensus management can help promote the business, increase profitability, efficiency making the work place and the staff feel appreciated, purposeful,

well-reasoned, and goal-directed - the kind of thinking involved in solving problems, formulating inferences, calculating likelihoods, and making decisions ... it's the kind of thinking that makes desirable outcomes more likely." Leaving the Team to feel they all achieved this together.

"TOGETHER EVERYONE ACHIEVES MORE" Team work, Team Building. This case study happened over twenty years ago, chances of this happening now are slim to none. Experts in business, education and employment have developed team building tools to create harmony within the workplace. Nowadays most employers have introduced mentors for all staff. Both The Employer and Employee would have benefitted from having a mentor, being able to discuss this bullying issue and enable both parties to look at the situation from the other person's perspective.

Team Building:

Team building whether at work or out of work is a significant contributor to motivation, this in turn builds trust amongst fellow colleagues, taking these steps can help to ensure the productivity is maintained and enhanced enabling the team to reach its designated goals.

The synergised combination is quite simple by interacting the combination you achieve the goal. Mullins, (2013) discusses the concept of synergy one plus one equals three where by the learner, plus knowledge/learning acquired amounts to more than the sum of two parts.

Being able to work and communicate effectively across all departments can surely benefit the team/organisation. Different cultures/ individuals? have different beliefs, generally by applying the method of Bono's conceptual tool of communication has been found to be of success in the workplace (Bono, 2009) HR Inductively assumed that everything was okay without gathering all the information, and it was clearly evident all was not.

For example, using inductive reasoning skills, not everyone who wears an Arsenal shirt support Arsenal this is an assumption, because this statement is not a true fact, however, one can understand the reasoning behind why someone would think that due to their beliefs. When in fact the reason behind this particular individual wearing the Arsenal jersey is because they lost a bet. However, the author explained The Employee was an ardent Arsenal fan, and The Employer once the relationship was becoming a strained tended to make remarks and comments about The Employers style of dressing. Could this be The

Employee believed without critically thinking that everyone wearing Arsenal/football tops are hooligans, having this very biased belief? Perhaps the belief that when going to work you should dress appropriately to stand out and look like a leader (Guisto, 2014), on the other hand wearing comfortable clothing to work can also have its benefits (Eggerson, 2016).

Could it be The Employer has had a bad experience with football, this nevertheless, should not cause such a very biased inductive way of reasoning/thinking.

Another example is everyone, who watches a football match at the stadium is a true supporter of the given club. Once again assumptions and beliefs are major factors, because an opportunity arose for the individual(s) to watch a live match at the stadium but the individual(s) actually are rugby fan(s) and really have little interest in football, It was more a case of, "just a day out for bonding and building relationships". Which on a team building day out was the case with The Employee's team, as not everyone were fans of the beautiful game of football, but enjoyed the time to socialize and interact outside of the workplace. Which has been found by surveys and scholars reap benefits for team morale (Weybrecht, 2017).

Nigeria is the largest populated country in Africa. This is a fact as evidence and research can back this up. Nigeria is a member of OPEC (Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) facts backed up with evidence. This style of reasoning is deductive as we can base the conclusion on the information at hand. Take the authors name Ojugo as an example from the name some might conclude the name is of Nigerian/African descent but it does not prove deductively the author is. On the other hand you have a brilliant lecturer who has a name Diola, which the name derives from a tribe in Senegal, Gambia and Guinea Bissau (Baum, 1999) when Diola introduced herself to the class at UWTSD (University of Wales Trinity and Saint David) automatically assumptions were made as to where is this intelligent lecturer from, by looking at the name, Diola..(Smith, 2015) Names are very important it says a lot about someone or an organization what image is portrayed. As a manager it is important to know the names of your team members as this makes the working experience more enjoyable, can you imagine the boss not knowing your name, how would he/she communicate or how would you feel if your boss could not remember or know your name.

Abductive reasoning is the conclusion is not absolute with this kind of reasoning unless you can gather as much information as possible for the hypothesis. Once you have the evidence you can now assimilate it the easiest way. HR took the inductive/abductive approach without getting all the information assumed the problem would fade away.

Management Theories Pros and Cons:

This section of the essay brings to light the concepts of Management Theories, looking at some of the advantages and disadvantages of these theories, and explore the question of whether the old styles can still be relevant in today and tomorrows world.

The first concept to discuss is **Scientific Management** this theory is focused on the progression of science, it is a methodical, and reasoning is logical and rational.

The father of the Scientific Management theory is **Frederick Winslow Taylor**, The Taylorism concept was formed in the latter half of the 19th century. In his opinion industries required competence as opposed to lenient incompetence. F.W Taylor invented the notion of '**Mental Revolution**' which fosters deep comprehension, convicted with faith enabling both workers and authority work in harmony. Gantt worked with Taylor who introduced a piece rate system, Frank and Lillian Gilbreth believed in regulation, helping increase productivity maintaining high efficiency, which rewarded the welfare of the workers; The living standards improved for the masses as goods were purchased at more affordable prices. Some of the key benefits are as follows:

- Development and increase in the production efficiency.
- Continuous observations and research leading to better management.
- Improved improvisations in the work place, enhancing the life of the employees.
- Taylorism lead to the creation of the huge structure and style of modern research and education and its quantitative methods of observation and research are based upon.

Scientific Management concepts can quite easily exploit and mistreat information generally by the industrial leaders. Investors were always trying to increase their own profits, this was

made possible by exploiting the workers overworking them to achieve their selfish ambitions. However, in the modern industrial world the economic competition is greater, overworking staff can cause inefficiency and stress in the workers. Some of the cons of this concept:

- Rigid rules and regulations which make the exploitation of the workers easier.
- Workers in different spheres of the production cycle will have no idea how the whole commodity is formed.
- Sole control of the workforce and its working process in the ambit of the authority; lack of human touch is absent, mainly money orientated no real development on human resource.
- Workers labelled as efficient or inefficient; no possibility is present for the creativity of the workers.

Human Resource Management morphed the classical approach now applying the Hawthorne effect born in 1924; paying more attention to workers, taking social influences into account; are major factors on productivity increasing. Some of the Pros and Cons of this theory, helps to increase staff morale and reduces resistance to formal authority. The author maintains that HR were helpful but should have done more. The Author believes HR did not want conflict with management, therefore, overlooked the initial bullying. It's a holistic theory, looking at the person in their entirety with a hands on approach. However, lack of research can lead to conflicts of interest. Furthermore, perhaps if Human Resources did more monitoring, sooner they would have picked up on the high staff turn-over rate in the team in this case study. Human Resources would have made the necessary enquiries, such as, talk to staff in the team including Employer and Employee, and review exit interviews of previous staff from this team.

Bureaucracy Management defined by Max Weber “rationalization of society” the two fundamental principles are Rule based power and Hierarchy, this process in modern society became concerned with Efficiency, Predictability, Calculating and Dehumanization. Being able to maximise the output and minimise the inputs, as mentioned earlier in the Tsar era subordinates are responsible for the level they are managing, and must answer to authority. This style of management as outlined during this essay can be quite outdated if not tweaked or amalgamated with another management concept, with critical thinking; due to The Employees style of management suffered resulting in high staff turnover; trade unions

formed. Trade Unions are now a fundamental part of any organisation, most employers will have a TU representative for all staff to seek advice from.

Systems Theory proposed in the 1940s by, Ludwig Von Bertalanffy similarly some methods of Hans Driesch, the inventor of the entelechy /ontogeny concepts being able to realize potential; systems work with sub systems and more super-systems making the bigger picture focus on the relationship between the parts that connect them in a whole, being able to interact parts makes the whole bigger than the parts themselves, (Synergy), viewing the organisation as an organism. Theorists have found that in order for this system to work effectively interdependence and interconnections must harmonise. A system is an objective interaction of elements aimed at reaching a specific goal, Taking the case and looking at the relationship between The Employer and Employee, the communication system broke down, although a contingency theory was outlined by The Employee, which was evident from the settlement, perhaps The Employer felt threatened by The Employee as the job The Employer was doing The Employee could also do it and perhaps better, hence the talk of promotion. Highly unlikely maybe The Employee, used a carrot stick approach such as the offer of promotion only to withdraw it later, a form of keeping the staff in check. More likely when The Employee refused to call the staff member who lost their Father, made The Employer react in this hostile way. This theory within the organisation has its down sides, closed systems are fixed relationships no interaction with the environment as opposed to open systems that allow scrutiny both inside and out (PESTLE) taking the Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental into consideration, maintaining that in order for a company to thrive being an organisation that take Global Sustainability into consideration (Dawar, 1999)

The Contingency Theory management style is widely used in the field of substance abuse, but can be applied to this case study. Woodward (1981) and Donaldson (2001) describe the concept of the way you manage the way you feel best suited to the present situation, Fiedler (1967) and Williams (2015) describe the way you lead should change depending on the circumstances and two factors play a part Task Motivation and Relation Motivation Circumstances are particularly important. Looking at how changes externally PESTLE, can affect the organisation, The author outlined that a bereavement within the workplace had a

domino effect internally from an external influence. First the loss of the employee's team members father, secondly the loss of The Employees uncle. The Employer did not appreciate the effect this would have on the staff, and should have made some allowances and shown some discretion but did not. Using this theory effectively The Employer and Employee could have made a plan to eradicate this problem sooner despite policies in place, management must always think critically in dealing with situations and initiate a consensus decision an acceptable resolution for all putting the best interests of all involved into account. It could prove difficult as in contingency approaches, if there are no challenges pushing to adapt business practice, management will rely on bureaucratic management styles. And this was evident in The Employers management style.

Conclusion:

All staff have a duty of care pastoral care, confidentiality, apply and discretion. Managers should be able to implement reasonable adjustments, which is key in employment.

Discrimination, disability, harassment policies are brought in for equality at work #MeToo.

A true leader can lead people without ruling them, The Human Resources Department, Union and ACAS were helpful in the settlement negotiations for The Employee and assisted for the settlement of £27,000. Nevertheless, being able to work as an individual and a member of a team, ethically thinking critically, outside the box is paramount yesterday, today and tomorrow.

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