

Applied Leadership and Management in the Workplace

Module Assignment Submission

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1. Introduction

In today's fast-paced and complex work environments, critical thinking is an essential skill for employees at all levels. It plays a crucial role across various professions and industries, contributing to effective decision-making and problem-solving. The ability to analyze situations, evaluate information objectively, and make informed decisions not only enhances productivity but also fosters innovation. This report examines the concept of critical thinking, its significance in the workplace, and its impact on professional success and organizational growth. Additionally, it explores strategies for developing this essential skill in professional settings."

According to Indeed,(2025) Understanding why critical thinking is important can help you effectively improve your short- and long-term career prospects. Being able to apply critical thinking skills means you can use rationality and logic to determine the answer to a problem.

This report will discuss biases and assumptions, including beliefs, attitudes, and values, and how they influence decision-making. It will also examine Bloom's Taxonomy and Paul-Elder's Critical Thinking Framework, highlighting how each contributes to critical thinking from different perspectives. Finally, a workplace scenario will be presented to demonstrate how these frameworks can be applied in a professional environment, showcasing their effectiveness in enhancing decision-making.

2. Critical Evaluation of the Role of Critical Thinking in Decision-Making and Problem-Solving

Thinking critically in a workplace environment can be highly valued, as it demonstrates the ability to make better decisions, feel more confident and empowered, this encourages an informed approach to problem-solving. If you can develop and demonstrate strong critical thinking skills, you'll be positioning yourself for career success. (David,2024).

According to Merriam-Webster(,(2025) critical thinking is the process of applying critical thinking to solve problems, evaluate information, and discern biases. Questioning, analysing, interpreting, evaluating, and passing judgement on what you read, hear, say, or write are all components of critical thinking. Making trustworthy decisions based on trustworthy information is the core of good critical thinking.

Critical thinking skills and attributes are interconnected and need to work together for your critical thinking to be effective. To become a better critical thinker, you therefore need to learn how to:

- **clarify** your thinking purpose and context
- **question** your sources of information
- **identify** arguments
- **analyze** sources and arguments
- **evaluate** the arguments of others and
- **create** or **synthesize** your own arguments.

Another solution to overcome problem solving is applying the 5Y's technique, when you need to identify the underlying reason of a problem or issue, you can apply the 5 Whys Problem Technique. The problem won't be genuinely solved by it. Finding the source of the issue can improve your problem-solving skills, but you may utilise another approach for this.

You could discover that the method is ineffective for complicated or large-scale problems. This is because you could get lost in the root cause analysis and the approach won't go deeply enough into its existing design. (David,2022).

Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom's Taxonomy is a hierarchical framework that classifies cognitive skills, originally developed by Benjamin Bloom (1956) and later revised in 2001 by Anderson and Krathwohl. It outlines six levels of thinking, progressing from basic recall to higher-order critical thinking skills. Bloom's taxonomy was developed to provide a common language for teachers to discuss and exchange learning and assessment methods. though it is most commonly used to assess learning on a variety of cognitive levels. below defines each cognitive level from higher- to lower-order thinking.

1.Remembering (Lowest Level) – Recall and Recognition

- The ability to retrieve, recall, or recognize basic facts and concepts.
- Identifying key definitions of critical thinking.

2. Understanding – Comprehension of Information

- Demonstrating comprehension by explaining ideas or concepts in one's own words.
- Summarizing the importance of critical thinking in the workplace.

3. Applying – Using Knowledge in Real-World Situations

- Applying learned concepts to new situations or solving problems in a practical context.
- Applying problem-solving strategies to resolve a customer complaint.

4. Analyzing – Breaking Down Information

- Examining parts of a whole, identifying patterns, relationships, and logical connections.
- Comparing different critical thinking models.
- Identifying biases in workplace decision-making.

5. Evaluating – Assessing and Making Judgments

- Making informed judgments based on criteria, logic, and reasoning.
- Assessing the effectiveness of a workplace decision.
- Justifying the best approach for problem-solving in a team.

6. Creating (Highest Level) – Innovation and Original Thinking

- Using existing knowledge to generate new ideas, solutions, or products.
- Designing a new training program for critical thinking development.
- Developing a new workplace strategy to improve decision-making.
McNulty,(2019).

Application: Problem-solving in the workplace requires a combination of cognitive skills that enable employees to analyze situations, weigh the advantages and disadvantages of a particular decision, evaluate options, and implement effective solutions. In other words, employees can't make effective choices if they don't build their cognitive skills, like deductive reasoning and attention. (Indeed,2025).

Below are key cognitive skills that contribute to efficient problem-solving and enables employees to understand, analyze and devise solutions to complex challenges (Perry,2023).:-

- critical thinking
- analytical reasoning,
- creativity,
- memory,
- executive functions

(Bakkah Learning,2024).

Paul-Elder Model

According to Paul and Elder (2006), critical thinking is *“the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.”*

Applying the Paul-Elder Critical Thinking Model at work creates a more considerate, productive, and creative atmosphere. It reduces biases and promotes a continuous improvement culture while improving decision-making, problem-solving, communication, and cooperation. In the end, these advantages result in a more successful and efficient organization. There are eight elements of reasoning—purpose, attempt, assumption, point of view, facts, concepts and ideas, and inference and interpretation are used by Paul-Elder's critical thinking framework for recognizing the components of thinking, to evaluate the applications of the above elements there are nine benchmarks uses- clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance, fairness. (Geraldine,2021).

These elements help individuals think more critically and systematically.

- **Purpose** – Defines the goal or objective of thinking, such as solving a problem or achieving a specific target.
- **Attempts** – Reviews prior efforts or solutions attempted to address the issue, identifying successes and shortcomings.
- **Assumptions** – Recognizes pre-existing beliefs or presuppositions about the topic. Initially, assumptions may be based on inductive reasoning and later refined through research and evidence.
- **Point of View** – Acknowledges the perspective from which the issue is approached.
- **Data, Information, and Evidence** – Involves gathering relevant facts, research findings, and supporting evidence to strengthen reasoning.
- **Concepts and Ideas** – Considers principles, models, and theories that provide a foundation for understanding and problem-solving.
- **Inferences and Interpretations** – Draws logical conclusions based on the synthesis of information, aiming to identify well-supported solutions.

- **Implications and Consequences** – Examines the potential outcomes of implementing a solution, ensuring that decisions lead to beneficial and ethical results.

According to Elmanzy,(2022). By using these components, people improve their decision-making and critical thinking in both academic and professional contexts by developing an organised, rational, and thoughtful approach to problem-solving.

3. Impact of Biases and Assumptions on Decision-Making

According to Mcfleurly(2025) Attitude and beliefs are part of what makes you who you are. They affect how you think, what you do and how you do it. Your background, upbringing, experiences and relationships will all have played a part in the way you see things. It is important to develop self-awareness as sometimes your attitudes and beliefs could lead you to assume things about people that are not right or fair. To work together with others in a way that considers their different attitudes and beliefs, you need to invest the time necessary to gain an understanding of these things.

Values are firmly held ideals or standards that direct actions and choices. They are influenced by social conventions, cultural background, and individual experiences. For instance, a company that values profitability may focus on cost-cutting strategies, while a company that values employee well-being may prioritize work-life balance initiatives. Leaders' values often shape corporate policies and business strategies.

Beliefs are assumptions or convictions that individuals accept as true, based on personal experiences, cultural background, or information they have acquired. Beliefs shape perceptions and responses to workplace situations. If a manager believes that employees work best under pressure, they may enforce tight deadlines, while another who believes in flexibility may encourage a more balanced approach. Misguided beliefs, such as gender biases or prejudices, can negatively impact hire and promotion decisions.

Attitudes are emotional or mental dispositions toward people, situations, or ideas. They are shaped by values and beliefs and influence workplace behavior. Attitudes affect productivity and teamwork. A leader with a supportive attitude fosters motivation and team collaboration, while a cynical or negative attitude may demoralize employees. In customer service, an employee's friendly and professional attitude enhances client satisfaction, while a dismissive attitude may drive customers away

Therefore, in a workplace setting beliefs, attitudes, and values play a crucial role in shaping workplace dynamics, influencing decision-making, communication, and overall organizational culture. These factors impact how employees interact, solve problems, and contribute to a productive work environment. Understanding the relationship between personal and organizational values is essential for fostering inclusivity, ethical decision-making, and effective teamwork.

RED Model of Critical Thinking

The RED Model's critical thinking skills framework has three main indicators including -(R) Recognize Assumptions; (E) Evaluate Arguments; and (D) Draw Conclusions. You can use the RED Model to analyze various types of information, such as news articles, reports, essays, or speeches, and to improve your own arguments and communication skills. The model helps you to identify and challenge the assumptions that underlie your own and others' reasoning, to assess the quality and relevance of the arguments that support or oppose a claim, and to reach logical and sound conclusions based on the evidence and criteria.(DISRUPTIVE LEADERSHIP, 2025)

- **Explanation:** According to TalentLen.(2021), Recognizing assumptions is a crucial step in identifying biases because assumptions often shape the way people interpret information, make decisions, and form opinions. how evaluating arguments helps in mitigating these biases. Evaluating arguments further strengthens this process by encouraging critical analysis of claims, evidence, and reasoning. By assessing the strength of arguments, individuals can separate facts from opinions, identify logical fallacies, and make more rational decisions. Together, recognizing assumptions and evaluating arguments help mitigate biases by fostering a more objective and evidence-based approach to reasoning.
- **Application:** The RED Model gives leaders the ability to critically evaluate their presumptions, thoroughly examine the reliability and applicability of the available facts, and synthesize this knowledge to create conclusions that are well-supported. This method reduces the possibility of mistakes and prejudices that may result from partial or biased perspectives. As a result, it results in better risk management, more successful strategies, and better organizational outcomes. (KALEIDOSKOPE,2024).

Bloom's Taxonomy

As previously discussed, blooms taxonomy is a hierarchical framework that classifies cognitive skills, and it was created to establish a shared framework for educators to

communicate and refine teaching and assessment strategies. While it primarily serves as a tool for evaluating learning across different cognitive levels.

- **Application:** Biases at various cognitive levels can lead to flawed decision-making by distorting how information is recalled, interpreted, applied, analyzed, evaluated, and used to generate new ideas. Confirmation bias can cause a hiring manager to recall only the past successes of employees from a particular university while ignoring instances where such hires underperformed, leading to unfair hiring preferences, also stereotyping can result in a team leader assuming that older employees are resistant to technology, preventing them from being included in digital transformation projects and causing the company to overlook valuable experience, using the blooms taxonomy can prevent work scenarios

Paul-Elder Model

As previously discussed According to the Paul-Elder Critical Thinking Model.(2001), intellectual standards are crucial for assessing cognitive processes and guaranteeing logical, objective decision-making. People may identify and fix biases and beliefs that might affect their reasoning by using these criteria, which include clarity, correctness, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, importance, and fairness.

- **Explanation:** Applying intellectual criteria to decision-making improves objectivity and helps get rid of bias in a variety of professional situations. Clarity, for instance, may be used to clearly describe job criteria throughout the recruiting process, avoiding biased judgements based on poor perceptions. Accuracy guarantees that performance reviews are grounded in information rather than personal judgements. Relevance in project management keeps a team from becoming sidetracked by little, less important issues and helps them concentrate on essential performance measures. To detect and lessen prejudices and presumptions in decision-making, use the intellectual criteria. Individuals and organizations may reduce prejudices, guarantee equity, and enhance the level of their thinking by incorporating these intellectual norms into routine decision-making, which will eventually produce more morally and practically sound results.
- **Application:** once these standards have been met, decision making will come a lot easier to employees in a workplace and their level of thinking will improve helping get rid of bias in professional environment.

(universityoflouisville,2025).

4. Application of Critical Thinking Frameworks to a Workplace Scenario

Workplace Scenario example

Scenario: a customer has ordered a cake from a home bakery for an occasion and hasn't transported the cake correctly and followed the guideline provided by the bakery, this has then resulted in a damaged cake, a complaint and a loss profit.

The baker believes she handed over the cake in the correct manor and handled the cake throughout the process correctly, so it wasn't due to mishandled goods or packaging, to have an understand of what happened she went through the 5y's. The five whys (5 whys) are a problem-solving method that explores the underlying cause-and-effect of particular problems, according to Tulip.(2025, The main benefit of the Five Whys is that it is one of the most powerful assessment methods of all non-statistical analyses. It can uncover and trace back to problems that were not very clear or obvious. Once these have been looked over and broken down a solution is looked at to overcome this problem and approach it in the correct manor, in this particular scenario the baker asked for photos of the damaged cake, and asked a few questions to gather more evidence, the baker also relayed her policys and procedures in the company, once receiving this evidence, it was a clear indicator that the customer didn't handle the cake with proper care and follow the travel guideline provided, once evaluating photos and the scenario it was shown the cake was next to a heater and travelled on the customers lap, however to keep to professional standards the baker offered a full refund and to fix the damaged cake which lead into a profit loss for the business.

In scenarios like this, applying Paul-Elder's Critical Thinking Model, Bloom's Taxonomy, or the RED Model could lead to a more effective outcome. Educating companies on these critical thinking frameworks can enhance decision-making processes and provide valuable support in handling similar situations. The following section will present a more detailed analysis of how these models can be applied to resolve this scenario.

The Paul-Elder Model

Explanation: The Paul-Elder model's elements of thought guide the team through the decision-making process. They define the purpose so in this case it will be to resolve the damage cake, then its moves onto identify the question at issue , how to fix the issue, as stated the baker offered a full refund but in future she could offer a discount for future orders and try to amend the cake free of charge, while gathering the information, this step has already been done by talking to the customer , make inferences as previously discussed the possible causes of this happening was the cake wasn't handled with care while travelling and it was a possibility it wasn't in a cool environment, consider concepts , examine assumptions- fixed cake for customer, evaluate implications, hopefully the customer is satisfied with the outcome and returns for future cakes, and consider different points of view, if this happens again for the benefit of the company offering a discount and trying to fix the damage cake will be much profitable for business.

The bakery may improve customer service, problem-solving, and company operations by using Paul-Elder's Critical Thinking Model to methodically assess the issue and make just and thoughtful judgements.

Bloom's Taxonomy

Explanation: a customer receiving a damaged cake presents a challenge that requires critical thinking and problem-solving. Using Bloom's Taxonomy, the baker can address the situation effectively by applying different cognitive levels.

- **Remembering (Recall Information)**
 - Identify past policies and procedures regarding customer complaints and damaged goods.
 - As this was a first time for the company, they can always Recall this instance if it accrues again and look how they handled it.
- **Understanding (Explain the Situation)**
 - Analyze how the cake was damaged- as previously discussed in the Paul elders model it was damaged during transportation and not following guidelines on how to transport, handling the cake and the temp of the car.
 - For future, the baker will draw up a policy, explain the bakery's policies to the customer, ensuring they understand the terms if this was to happen again.
- **Applying (Use Knowledge to Solve the Problem)**
 - Offer an immediate solution, such as a refund, discount, or cake replacement, in this scenario the baker offered a full refund and to fix the cake free of charge
 - Implement preventive measures, such as improved communication or delivery procedures.
- **Analyzing (Break Down the Issue & Identify Patterns)**
 - Determine the root cause of the damage: Was it a packaging issue, or a transportation problem? In this case it was transportation problems.
- **Evaluating (Assess the Best Course of Action)**
 - By Weighing the pros and cons of various solutions, considering customer satisfaction, business costs, and brand reputation. The bakery business was at a loss by offering a full refund, if this was to happen again the company would approach this situation with a different outcome.
 - Seek customer feedback to understand their expectations and make an informed decision.
- **Creating (Develop & Implement a Long-Term Solution)**
 - Design handling system to minimize future damages.
 - Develop a customer service protocol to handle similar issues more efficiently in the future.

By applying Bloom's Taxonomy, employees in the baking business can systematically address customer complaints, improve service quality, and prevent future problems, ultimately enhancing customer satisfaction and business success.

RED Model of Critical Thinking

- **Explanation:** The RED Model (Recognize Assumptions, Evaluate Arguments, Draw Conclusions) helps the team recognize assumptions, arguments and draw conclusions. It also provides a structured approach to critical thinking and problem-solving. Applying this model to a customer complaint about a damaged cake ensures a fair, logical, and effective resolution. (Stribling, 2023).

Application:

Recognize Assumptions (Identify What Is Taken for Granted)

- **Customer's Assumption:** They expected the cake to be in perfect condition and believe the bakery is responsible for any damage.
- **Bakery's Assumption:** The cake left the bakery in good condition, so external factors (delivery, handling) may have caused the issue.
- **Employee's Assumption:** The customer may have mishandled the cake after receiving it.

Action: Avoid making biased assumptions. Gather facts about when and how the damage occurred before deciding on a resolution.

Evaluate Arguments (Analyze the Situation Objectively)

- **Customer's Argument:** They received a damaged product and deserve compensation or a replacement.
- **Business's Argument:** The cake was in perfect condition when it left the bakery, so the damage may not be the bakery's fault.
- **Possible Causes to Consider:**
 - Was the cake packaged securely?
 - Was it mishandled during transport? (the bakery believes it could be due to transport error and not following guideline provides)
 - Did the customer store it improperly after pickup? (if heat is exposed to the cake, it can damage the cake or melt it)

- **Action:** Assess all perspectives fairly and determine if the business is responsible or if external factors played a role.

Draw Conclusions (Make an Informed Decision and Take Action)

- **If the bakery is at fault** (e.g., poor packaging, mishandling by staff):
 - Apologize to the customer and offer a replacement, refund, or discount.
 - Implement better packaging and handling procedures to prevent future incidents.
- **If external factors caused the damage** (e.g., customer mishandling, transportation issues):
 - Politely explain the situation to the customer and provide storage/handling guidelines for future purchases.
 - Offer a goodwill discount or store credit to maintain customer satisfaction.

Final Action: Ensure a customer-focused yet fair resolution, balancing business interests and customer loyalty.

The bakery can use the RED Model to rationally assess the situation, steer clear of assumptions, and make well-informed decisions that uphold business integrity and improve customer satisfaction.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, critical thinking is an essential part in a workplace and in general life, to be able to think critically and apply decision making is a crucial professional ability that empowers workers to assess circumstances, make wise choices, and resolve issues successfully. As seen above utilizing models like the RED Model, Paul-Elder's Critical Thinking Framework, and Bloom's Taxonomy, can help in any scenario and any industry, organizations may improve decision-making procedures, lessen biases, and promote a continuous improvement culture.

Critical thinking is crucial for more than just individual achievement; it also fosters teamwork, creativity, and overall organisational success. Workers with critical thinking skills are better able to assess difficulties and foresee possible problems.

A key takeaway from this report is the profound impact that biases, assumptions, values, and beliefs can have on workplace decision-making. Unconscious biases can lead to flawed judgments, while unquestioned assumptions may limit creative solutions. By actively

engaging in intellectual discipline, questioning existing perspectives, and evaluating multiple alternatives, employees can overcome these limitations and make decisions based on logic, fairness, and accuracy.

Additionally, encouraging critical thinking at work improves teamwork, communication, creativity, and adaptability—all of which are vital in the cutthroat corporate world of today. A culture of ongoing learning and development is fostered by staff members who are urged to exercise critical thinking, question preconceived notions and look for evidence-based solutions.

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