

Developing workplace critical thinking

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Part 1 Report

Introduction

This report has six main parts, assessing the differences between beliefs, values and attitudes, introducing the organisation, debating the current issues such as Covid-19 impact on the organisations,, analysing the management theory used by H&M and application of a selected critical thinking model RED. The report concludes with recommendations.

Assessing beliefs, values and attitudes

Critical thinking is a skill that is vital in order to make conscious, well-informed decisions. The decisions you make in the present will impact the quality of your life in the future.

Views are formed over a period of time and are influenced by external factors like family and friends, society practices, past experiences and learning curves. The attitudes refer to what we feel and think about a person or about a situation. It refers to our reaction about a place, an object, a person or a situation. Attitudes can change in different environments such as the workplace.

A belief is an established idea over something or someone that is considered to be true from the beginning without having the need to investigate the truthful elements and it has a more internal character. There are not based on empirical evidence and questioning strong beliefs can surface high passion and conflicts. The values are the set of principles that are very important for the person. It refers to our considerations on what is right or wrong what is ethical, what has greater importance and what it aligns with the moral standards. Values and beliefs determine the behaviour in everyday life, but it also applies to the workplace environment. The concepts are interrelated, but they are distinctive because the beliefs are already accepted as true and values are ideals of behaviours, standards and principles that there are set up by importance. Beliefs tend to have a more religious character, but is not always the case. Example of beliefs are God is the creator of the world, to lie is very bad thing to do. Examples of values are courage, respect, honesty (Handley, 2011).

In everyday life we act based on own beliefs and values. I have strong religious beliefs because I grew up in a community where going to church on Sunday and praying was part of everyday life. Also I have strong family values, I am a family person and I believe that it is the most rewarding for someones life. My attitude towards society is to be kind with others and refrain of being mean and inconsiderate to others.

At the workplace I am a team player and if I resonate with the values and attitudes I am a hard worker and I try to integrate and get involve in the organisation and share the values of the organisation.

Critical thinking means not taking anything for granted and accept assumptions and biased information. At the workplace managers and employees can easily make assumptions, especially when they work in teams and have bonded and created different relationships. When a conflict arises at the workplace it is important that the parties involved or the manager should listen to all and seek for evidence instead of having preferences.

Developing workplace critical thinking

The critical thinking involves logic, consideration and rationalism and the will to seek understanding beyond provided information. This attitude towards questioning and evaluation when receiving information can help the individual overcome bias and personal opinions from facts and reality.

H&M is a Swedish organisation and is a has been founded in 1947. It has quite a long history in fashion retailing and it is a known and trusted brand internationally. The group has a large team of designers in order to have exquisite designs. It sells a variety of products to different segments and it offers in trend fast fashion at affordable prices. The group promotes quality and is formed form several brands such as H&M, H&M Home, COS, Weekdays, Arket, Afound, Monky (H&M, 2022). Covid-19 affected the entire business world in a way or another and many business are still recovering after the pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic has put the world in crisis and business were not prepared for such disruptions as it has never been faced before. Business had to adapt and try different strategies to see how they could resume activity. It was the same for Governments everywhere in the world trying to tackle pandemic.

H&M had to adapt to all the Governmental policies related to pandemic regarding sanitising, social distancing and most influential it had to close its stores. A great value of 80% of H&M stores were closed during pandemic and it has affected the economic gain (H&M corporation, 2022).

All business had to identify ways to trade in such unforeseen circumstances. The Covid-19 Pandemic has created uncertainty for the organisation. In such circumstances critical thinking for decision making was vital because the group had to identify resources to manage the situation. Therefore the consumer behaviour was forced to choose online shopping because of lockdowns and

restrictions. Developing online shopping was the best option to increase revenue as in 2020 H&M lost 18% of their revenue because of pandemic. H&M had managed the situation efficiently because it had the resources for online shopping and it had also donated an amount of \$500,000 to World Health Organisation for helping with pandemic (H&M Corporate, 2022).

Management theories in H&M

H&M basis its activity on Human Resources Management. It aims to motivate its employees and has clear policies to articulate their values. It respects the individual by providing fair wages, appropriate working hours, freedom of association, it gives opportunity for growth and career development. This can lead to positive attitudes from their employees also because it has an open door policy to have direct contact with manager if desired to discuss work related issues.

In order to motivate employees, H&M looks at job rotation, promotions, monetary rewards. This is part of Human Resources management. It can be assessed that is difficult to quantify motivation because what motivates a person does not motivate another one. Internal promotion is another way to motivate practised by H&M. That is why the attitudes in H&M relate to commitment and organisational growth is intended to generate employee growth and career development.

The organisation has an appointed CEO who manages and deals with the every day activity and the leadership in H&M is focusing on responsibility, creativity, value driven and consumer focused. The organisational culture is inclusive and promotes teamwork which is good for the organisation, but it can be missed the innovative and originality if it is not promoted more. Within the organisation there is the concept of “H&M spirit” which incorporates their values (Capell, Khermouch, 2002).

Application of RED critical thinking model

The RED critical thinking model has been introduced by Watson Glaser and is a test that can be realised in three steps recognise assumptions, evaluate arguments, draw conclusions (Think Watson, 2022).

The first step to recognise assumptions refers to the comprehension of the information, understanding what is being communicated and checking for any evidence. The assumptions refer to the statements that consider something for granted. It is important to identify when it has been made assumptions and their validity. In this stage there are identified the logical inconsistencies and any missing information.

The next stage is to evaluate arguments. By taking a systematic approach to analyse the evidence, the individual is able to maintain objectivity and critically evaluate the information. It is very important to put away any emotions and preferences which could influence the evaluation.

The last stage of the model is to draw conclusions and this can be realised by looking at the array of information and based on evidence to conclude what is most logical and if imposed a different conclusion than what was presented. The conclusion has to be impartial and objective. It has to be well informed and valid.

H&M has important values related to sustainability and in the latest period of time, H&M has intensified their activity towards having sustainable activity. It has developed strategies and has focused on CSR activity which has been awarded as presented in their sustainability reports (H&M, 2018). The pandemic has influenced the sustainable activity because it has pushed the organisation to develop their digital capabilities and expand their e-commerce activity. Also during pandemic the stores obliged to all the restrictions and policies with social distancing measures put in place, asking customers to wear masks, having employees wearing masks, closing fitting rooms, offering stations with antibacterial gel.

I believe H&M has managed very well the effects of pandemic and lockdowns and it had managed to present itself as a brand that cares, especially by its orientation to sustainability. As a H&M customer I can have biased beliefs, but by applying the red model I am looking at evidence and further information and even in the H&M stores there are advertised clothes recycling programs.

I believe H&M values regarding its sustainability projects which are available to the public on their website encompasses great resources and effort from the organisation who chooses to care and act as much as it can to reduce waste and pollution.

Despite that many has criticised fast fashion as being a great source of waste and pollution because of the manufacturing processes, but also because their products can be seen as disposable and customers wanting new clothes with every trend (Regner, Yildiz, 2020) .

H&M is a responsible organisation that takes responsibility for the way their operation impacts environment and “Taking responsibility for how our operations affect people and the environment is also an essential prerequisite for H&M’s continued profitability and growth” (H&M, 2022)

H&M is an international brand and they staff a large number of employees with different cultural background. Another value of H&M is to promote diversity and equal rights. H&M's espoused values are stated to be the foundation for a multinational company in a multi cultural market where great respect is paid to the individual. Despite that H&M has received criticism and has been reported for racial discrimination in a conflict about a racial slur name given to a product and legal action was taken.

Based on the information and evidence evaluation it can be considered that H&M is driven by strong values such as commercial mindset, entrepreneurship, sustainability and values its employees considering that is a large organisation, while focusing on quality and continued profitability.

Recommendations

H&M has a positive activity, but it should put more efforts to enforce their policies and to make sure that their values are shared across the entire organisation. It should create a department of H&M ambassadors who should promote the H&M spirit, it should be more training for their managers who could share the H&M values to the staff and this way to determine the right work attitudes. The organisation needs more consistency in order to have a strong culture.

Conclusions

It has been analysed the importance of critical thinking and it has been provided personal examples, but also it has been assessed the activity of H&M. It has been established that the critical thinking is very important for clear communication, for decision making. It has been assessed H&M management approach and it has been observed that the Human Relation approach works for them as an organisation. The report researched the belief, values and attitudes from H&M and by using RED model it has been critically evaluated the organisation way of action.

Part 2 Reflection

Introduction

This reflection is part 2 of my assignment for Developing workplace critical thinking. It is based on the learning from this module and it aims to help me have a better understanding of what we learned about, to reflect on the ways we learned during this module and how to make use of the concepts learned in the future as a student, in my personal life, but also at the workplace.

This reflection uses Gibbs reflective model for doing my reflection and I use this model for making sure the learning is efficient and that the learning experience is complete. I give detailed examples of the learning materials and knowledge gained with this module by presenting following the timeline of the duration to the module. I consider the description stage is an important part because I have to synthesis and allocate importance for each of the topic taught and it reminds me of the volume of knowledge learned and how to make use of it. The last stage from the reflection is used for doing an action plan which will help me for the future.

Reflection

The ability to reflect on behaviours, actions and situations in order to learn is called reflective practice. It is an ability that can be developed as well as critical thinking. It is based on theoretical models which create the frame for the reflective writing (Gardner, 2014). There are different authors that developed different reflection models, but the model that I am using for my reflection is the Gibbs model. I selected this model because I consider that is straight forward and because we have used previously since I am studying this course. Therefore I will be able to focus on the what we learned during this module, instead of being preoccupied to identify un less familiar reflective theory.

I consider that this reflection will help me develop critical thinking as I will refer to all the learning from the lectures from week 1 to week 10. This reflection will enhance my ability to form ideas and thoughts regarding the learning and will help me have a clear understanding of my learning experience from this module.

Gibbs (1988) reflective model states that with every experience it should be reflected so that the learning is realised. The reflective model has 6 steps that must to be followed to have an efficient reflection. The steps are description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and action plan. By

using this framework the reflector would be able to identify areas for development and how to continue development.

Description: the learning experience that I want to reflect on is the learning realised for my module Developing Workplace Critical Thinking. We had 10 learning sessions and the learning was realised online. Each week had distinctive materials on different topics regarding critical thinking and we had access to power point presentations, extra reading materials, activities, videos. Further that we were communicating on group chats and we were also able to speak and ask questions. The lecturer was always trying to engage and empower us to participate at the activities. In week 1 we had an introduction to the module, we had a video available about deductive and inductive logic. The power point presentation described the content of the module, but also introduced us the meaning of different terms to critical thinking. We learned about the evolution of the management theories and that organisations can make use of a combination of theories. We learned about the various effects of various changes for organisations. Once again we were told about Harvard Referencing system. The video with tips for from week 2 had explained how to have critical thinking in 5 concrete steps which referred to the week 2 power point presentation about values attitudes, beliefs and critical thinking. Week 3 we learned about characteristics of good critical thinkers and we started to learn one by one different management theories. In week 3 we learned about human relations. In week 4 we moved our focus to organisations and business environments and we were taught about creative thinking. We learned about inductive and deductive logic and in the group chat we were given a link for a video on the topic on youtube. We learned about red model and we received extra reading material about it. We were presented the decision making process and we had the alternatives of critical thinking and creative thinking. we learned another management theory scientific management which developed along with developing industries in the beginning of the 19th century. In week 5 we were explained the 6 thinking hats model and how to use the model. We were also taught about bureaucratic management which is still used in many organisations, despite its inflexibility it can be useful to some organisations that need strict structure. In week 6 we learned more about decision making, but we also receive guidance and structure for the assignment which I used for part 1 of my assignment. We continued to learn about another management theory the contingency theory. In week 7 we had a synthesis of the critical thinking learning and we learned about systems theory. In week 8 we had power point presentation about innovation and creativity and how organisations now seek innovation and create strategies for innovation. Organisation that are focus on innovation take certain risks and allocate important resources for research and development that are not always giving making money for the organisation. In week 9 we learned

about new topic sustainability. This was useful for my analysis on H&M as it gave me the knowledge about sustainability and what it refers to. In the final lecture from week 10 we had the opportunity to discuss different materials, concepts about critical thinking, organisations, business models, management approaches and also different critical thinking models. We always had extra material to read on Moodle which we could access all the time. Regarding the activities we were always given a period of time, usually around 15 minutes to read and discuss different materials and summarise in the group chat. For some activities we had to discuss Tesco Trade Deals, Policies, Rules and Regulations and the current changes with Brexit having different rules in the UK and different rules in the EU and the potential border problems. My colleagues talked about the changes which came with Brexit, lack of workers, trading regulations. For other activities we had to watch videos on YouTube such as The era of open innovation. For other activities we were asked to discuss about how society perceives the role of black mothers and how they should be supported. We could also watch videos about theoretical models such as de Bono's six thinking hats model. Other activities were asked to discuss about beliefs, attitudes and values and for debate we had different situations such as Problem vs Delicious Dilemma, Take a horse to water vs make it drink, summary dismissal: how to let/ make someone go. We also had to read various materials such as Cottrell "What is critical thinking".

Feelings: I felt overwhelmed by the abundance of information, but the group chats helped me understand better how can I have critical thinking. I felt anxious about writing in the group chats because of public speaking/ writing is still something that I need to work at. The I can do attitude of the colleagues had gave me a better perspective of how to be a critical thinker. Also I appreciated the help of the lecturer, always trying to determine us to make contributions to the session. I felt I had the right help to understand the concepts because the lecturer tried in many ways to helps us learn through videos, which many times were helpful because I am a visual learner, but many times were using a too complex language. I am aware online learning can be a little bit more difficult also because of the way of teaching and I consider that in class teaching would be more effective for me as I would not be able to hesitate or hide behind the computer and I could be more active and not just have the role of an observer. After this module I felt more empowered to put questions and to check facts and statements and I felt that I have to start practicing my critical thinking in day to day situations from personal life and not just say ok even if I have doubts about things.

Evaluation: My learning experience during this module is very positive as I learned by using practical examples of how to develop critical thinking, tips of how to develop critical thinking, but I was also taught by using theories and by activities to understand the application of the theories. The

main points that I learned about are importance of critical thinking at the workplace, differences between beliefs, values and attitudes, management approaches, critical thinking models. Each topic we learned about was discussed and explained by the lecturer and the teaching system worked very well for me.

Analysis: All the knowledge I learned during this module I could use it in my assignment for part 1 for analysing the activity of H&M. I was able to define critical thinking, I was able to establish the differences between beliefs, values and attitudes, I was able to assess own beliefs, attitude and values. Also I was able to understand the importance of critical thinking at the workplace by looking at H&M actions during Covid-19, its solutions and strategies put in place to overcome the challenges that Covid-19 situation has brought and what it needed to do to continue activity and to reduce as much as possible financial loss. Further that I was able to discuss the management theory used in H&M. From the critical thinking models I used the RED model which I needed to research more to understand exactly the stages and we had available extra material given by the lecturer. By using this model I was able to apply critical thinking regarding the values, beliefs and attitudes in H&M and I tried to look at statements and situations from different angles, to find evidence.

Conclusion: The learning experience from this module Developing workplace critical thinking has given me the tools to develop my own critical thinking on personal plan and personal situations, at my own work, but also to understand how organisations can make use of critical thinking for developing the organisation and for making the organisation more productive.

Action Plan

I intend to develop my critical thinking by applying all the knowledge I learned during this module. I intend to be more active at practical activities for future modules. I think also preparation and research is key for personal development and critical thinking will make me a more confident person. I would have a more clear picture of what it is discussed because I would have explored different angles and evidence of what we are presented and be a more knowledgeable person. This approach will also help me at the workplace as I would be able to find more efficient solutions when required.

Conclusion

This reflection has helped me elaborate the knowledge gained from this module Developing workplace thinking and by using the Gibbs reflective model I was able to critically assess what was learned, what was relevant for my assignment, how will the knowledge help me as a student

and as a professional. I benefited of a very good lecturer who put great effort to teach us using different ways of teaching, visual, auditive and I found very helpful the video from video which gave us clear indications for how to approach our assignment and gave explicit explanations of how to do the assignment. It also helped identify a way to use the knowledge learned to become a critical thinker and how to action for the future. I refer to the future for my continuity as a student and for my personal development and career development.

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