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COURSE NAME:

**Critical Thinking 1 Exam**

ATLANTIC INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

**June/2022**

**Introduction**

Critical Thinking is an in-depth way of thinking which involves the use of a framework and tools unlike the automatic thinking which does not employ reasoning before deciding on the way forward. The framework of Critical thinking which uses the three-step process involves clarity, conclusions and decisions (Kallet, 2014).

Clarity is all about getting clear of and understanding the problem, which ordinarily is not done in automatic thinking. We tend to spend less time understanding the problem and end up making mistakes in decision making. Conclusions is a process of coming to up with a solution of the clear goal or problem. This step provides for ideas of how to solve the problem or meet a goal before decision making. Enough time should be taken on this step as it builds on the clear goals. Decision which is the last step in the three-step process follows the conclusion step. In automatic thinking, this step follows the clarity step without taking time to make a conclusion. It is hardly done, ending up with mistakes in the thinking process. In Critical thinking, these steps follow each other with more times spent on the clarity and the conclusion step which makes the decision step even much easier (Kallet, 2014).

**Answers to Exam Questions.**

Answer with 1 to 5 paragraphs each question. (Include personal opinions and examples from your life and community)

*Exercises to Help Empty Your Bucket… page 26*

**1.** Before you approach a problem to solve, or if you’re currently engaged in this process, spend five minutes and write down all the items you think are in your bucket that might be influencing the way you think about this particular problem. Include both those that negatively and those that positively influence you.

a. Discussing my promotion with my supervisor will not help.

This influences my work negatively because most of my peers have been promoted in the last three years and I am wondering why my promotion has taken this long. I have been working extra hard and i have improved my qualifications to no avail. I have approached my supervisor over the matter severally and this has been affecting my performance due to frustration.

b. I will not be able clear them by weekend due to Conflicting work assignments on my desk.

This motivates me to work on each assignment at a time and to prioritize them. In this way I will make less mistakes as I decide find solutions for each assignment.

c. We know the hospitals that do not send bills on time.

We are preconceived with the idea that the hospitals that send bills late will always be sending bills late on a monthly basis. This makes us fail to meet our monthly targets of concluding bill payments. This negatively influences our thinking and we started calling even before the monthly deadlines.

d. We won’t be able to manage with the budget constraints.

We have already made a decision even before finding conclusions. This negatively impacts on the departmental budgeting decisions. The thought has influenced our budgeting priorities and we have made a decision to lobby to management to increase the budget allocation.

**2.** What story or event in your life are you going to use when you get bogged down in your bucket? The answer is the story that will have you say, “Gee, if I/they were able to solve that problem, then I will be able to solve this problem”; in other words, “There is always a way.”

In June 2021, I had a COVID-19 infection. I was at home with my three children who had to take care of me while I was in quarantine. I felt helpless and used to pray for recover so that I could continue to take care of my children as I had always done. One night I woke up breathless and i could not take in air. I then cried out and lost consciousness just before my children, came into the room. When I gained consciousness, they called family and friends who gave them instruction on what to do. I was taken to the hospital where I spent the rest of the night on Oxygen and was discharged the following morning. That whole time, I kept praying for recovery and when i was discharged, I said ‘’Gee, if others were able to survive the COVID-19 infection, then I will be able to survive it too’’. I was reading and hearing of some of my family members and friends who had either died or recovered from the illness. This news was depressing to me, and I was hoping that none of my children would get the infection. We managed to follow the quarantine guidelines and I recovered from the infection without any of my children getting it. ‘’There is always a way’’.

**3.** When someone says to you, “Yeah, we tried that a half dozen times already,” how are you going to respond?

‘’ There is always a way’’ We can sit down and think and the possibilities of redoing it differently than it was being done before. We can brainstorm and come up with a solution before we decide that we cannot do it.

**4.** On the notion that “There’s always a way.”, give a few examples of a goal thought to be unreachable that was somehow achieved. Cite specific times when everyone was down and defeated, and then someone came in and was able to use a new idea to solve the challenge.

A few months ago, the health facilities for our company started vaccinating against COVID-19 using the various vaccines that are available in Zambia. Eligible employees were able to receive first time vaccinations and boosters. The vaccinators kept records of the vaccines that were used and as they were preparing the reports at the end of the first month, they noticed that they did not have a record of the number of people that had received the vaccine boosters.

They discussed where they were going to find the information to report on and argued on how they had tried to come up with the figures. When they could not find a way on how to complete the report without the missing figures, they came to my office and explained that there was no way of completing the report. The first thing I actually told them was that ‘’ there’s always a way’’ and they tried to convince me that they could not complete the report without the missing figures. I then asked them how many vaccines we had been given for our centres, we then got the figures of the first doses, subtracted them from the number of vaccines received and got the number of the second doses. That is how we found the figures to use in completing the COVID-19 vaccination report and modified the report collecting tool in order to capture the second doses.

**5.** Listen to others’ frustrations and make a list of what you think is in their buckets and why. Then, ask them. If you’re going to help others empty their buckets, you have to know what’s in there.

a. An employee who had a disciplinary case a year ago says, ‘i think that I will not be promoted’.

 b. After being re-instated to her old job, she says “Everyone thinks that i a problem’’

 c. She feels uncomfortable around people she says, ‘i think that people are always talking about her’.

 d. An employee whose supervisor has not recommended her for promotion, even she works very hard. She says, ‘my boss does not appreciate my efforts’.

 e. A woman who is near retirement says, ‘I don’t know how to start a business to earn extra income before I retire’.

*Exercises for Inspection… page 31*

**1.** Rewrite these sentences so that they are clear:

• “We need to get there faster.”

We need to get there in the next 15 minutes.

• “Our project is behind schedule.”

Our project should be ready in six months’ time, we should complete it within four months.

• “If we had more resources, we could get this done on time.”

If we had fifteen more workers, three more vehicles and USD 5,000 more, we could get this done on time.

• “Try this again; only this time, do it with quality.”

Try this again only this time, document everything that you have done.

• “The brochure you are creating should have a blue cover.”

How much of the blue colour should be on the cover, should the blue colour be in the background of the cover or in the picture on the cover?

• “I’ll get back to you soon on that issue.”

I will get back to you in two days’ time over the disease outbreak report.

• “Don’t worry; I have it under control.”

Don’t worry; I will take pay off the USD 150 of rentals and get a new apartment at a cheaper rate of USD100 per month.

• “Please call these customers and find out what they want.”

Please call these customers and find out how we can be of help, is it with our services, or our schedules, or our delivery time?

• “You need to document your work.”

It is necessary for you to document your work schedule for this week in a report that should be ready by the end of business today.

**2.** Look at the last three e-mails you received. Do you understand all the words?

No, I did not understand all the words because the sender did not indicate whether they were acknowledging that the medical bill amounts were correct or not.

Is it possible you might misunderstand something?

Yes, I misunderstood the email because the reason for sending the message was not clear, it did not explain why they were disputing the payslip deductions based on the medical bills.

If so, what question(s) might you ask to get a better idea of what the sender meant?

1. What is purpose for this email?
2. What error is on your payslip?
3. How much was the deduction and how many times was it made
4. How has this deduction affected your monthly budget?

Did you ask those questions?

Yes, I asked the questions to the employee who is disputing the medical bill deduction.

**3.** Take a look at the goals your manager sets for you or that you set for others. Are they clear? Are they specific? Is there ambiguity in how they would be measured?

The goals set by my manager are not clear, so, I usually work on draft work and give him to review the work before I finalize it.

The goals are not specific, I usually try to finish each assignment within the same day or within two days, depending on the amount of work.

There is ambiguity in how they would be measured because it is determined by what he classifies as urgent on his desk.

*Exercises for Why… page 42*

**1.** Take out your to-do list and look closely at each item.

a. To complete the list of hospital contracts

b. Write a memo for the inactive employee’s medical bills

c. Respond to employees queries of medical bills deductions

Ask *why* you have it on your list.

a. To complete the list of hospital contracts.

Why do I have the hospital contracts on my to-do list?

Because the company is renewing the contracts which are overdue, and my office has to prepare the draft copies.

b. Write a memo for the inactive employee’s medical bills

Why do I have the to write this memo for the inactive employees’ medical bills? Because I am the focal point person for the company’s medical scheme with external hospitals and my office coordinates and facilitates for medical bills payments for services rendered.

c. Respond to the employees queries of the medical bills deductions

Why do I have to respond to the employees’ queries of the medical bills deductions? Because most of the queries are brought to my office for clarification and investigation before explaining to the aggrieved employees.

Once you answer the question, ask, “Are the items on my to-do list the only things I have to complete to fulfill my *why* for doing them?”

a. To complete the list of hospital contracts.

Why do I have the hospital contracts on my to-do list?

Because the company is renewing the contracts which are overdue, and my office has to prepare the draft copies.

No, this is not the only thing that I have to complete to fulfill my why for doing them. I still have to contact other departments such as the Legal, for input and guidance on the contracts.

b. Write a memo for the inactive employee’s medical bills

Why do I have the to write this memo for the inactive employees’ medical bills? Because I am the focal point person for the company’s medical scheme with external hospitals and my office coordinates and facilitates for medical bills payments for services rendered.

No, I have to consult with other departments such as the payroll administrator and the accountant on how the medical bills for the inactive employees can be processed for payments.

c. Respond to the employees queries of the medical bills deductions

Why do I have to respond to the employees’ queries of the medical bills deductions? Because most of the queries are brought to my office for clarification and investigation before explaining to the aggrieved employees.

No, I have to consult with other departments such as the payroll administrator, Industrial Relations and the accountants on the employees’ payslip deductions before proceeding with the investigations.

**2.** Look at your goals. Why are these the goals you’ve chosen?

They have to be achieved in order to avoid uncertainties of the medical scheme services with our hospital partners and the employees.

**3.** Ask someone—a peer, subordinate, or family member—to do something, explain why you are asking. Give him or her the opportunity to question why you want it done. What happened? Was the communication better? How?

I had asked my sister to find out how much the houses cost in the area where she lives. I was asking her because I want to compare the prices of the houses with the rates in another district and use the information to negotiate the offer of a house.

When she questioned why I was wanted that information, she understood, and it was easy for her when I clarified the reason why I wanted to know the costs of houses in her area.

The communication was better, she gave me the information that I wanted in just two days. Because she just asked a few of her friends and she was able to give me he prices for the houses there.

**4.** The next time you find yourself explaining to someone *how* to do something, think about *why* you do it that way. You may find no reason, other than you’ve done it that way before. Why do you do it that way? Is there another way possibly to do it?

A month ago, the receiving nurse had encountered a challenge in receiving Gentian Violet (GV) paint in the company’s Store and Procurement Management System which was giving an error message that the supply was completed. The receiving nurse asked the system administrators to explain why the system was giving that error message even when the quantity of the received GV paint was less than the total quantity. She was told to check the goods received note (GRN) and compare with the physical quantity, she noticed that she had made a mistake on entering the received quantity. We had done it that way before according to the procedure of receiving goods in the system, but this time she had made a mistake.

Yes, there is another way possible to do it. The other way of doing it was for another nurse to verify the received quantity before entering in the system.

*Exercises for So What… page 49*

**1.** Pick up any item on your desk—a piece of paper, a pen, a cup holder—what is the *so what* about that item? Why is it important? How is it relevant? What if it weren’t there?

A piece of paper.

The ‘so what’ about this item is that it has writings that I make when I am thinking about employees medical bills. What the inventor of paper thought it could be used for writing, the writings only make sense to me, it is folded, and I will use it until it is filled up.

**2.** Break out your to-do list again. In the exercises for *why*, you asked why those items were on your list—which hopefully helped you discover what problem you were solving. Go back to that list now and ask, “So what?” So what if you fix that or do that? So what if you don’t? You put it on your to-do list, but what happens if you don’t accomplish it or get it done in the time you established?

a. To complete the list of hospital contracts.

* So what if you fix that or do that?

We shall be current with the hospital contracts and the hospitals will be bound to the contract in service provision.

* So what if you don’t?

The contracts will keep pending on my desk.

* You put it on your to-do list, but what happens if you don’t accomplish it or get it done in the time you established?

The hospitals will be operating without contracts the services can be withheld.

b. Write a memo for the inactive employee’s medical bills.

* So what if you fix that or do that?

The payment process to settle the bills will commence.

* So what if you don’t?

The payments will be pending and queries of non-payment of bills will keep coming in.

* You put it on your to-do list, but what happens if you don’t accomplish it or get it done in the time you established?

The delay will not reflect well on the department and the hospitals can withdraw their services to the employees.

c. Respond to employees queries of medical bills deductions

* So what if you fix that or do that?

The queries will reduce, and the employees will understand the deductions.

* So what if you don’t?

The queries of the medical bills deductions will not be resolved.

* You put it on your to-do list, but what happens if you don’t accomplish it or get it done in the time you established?

There will be an uproar from the aggrieved employees over their medical deductions.

**3.** While working or interacting with your colleagues, kids, or spouse, notice an accomplishment or something that surprises you—something positive. Ask yourself, “So what?” Should you highlight the accomplishment? Does the person you are interacting with understand the *so what* (the value) behind his or her action?

I was struggling to get an application for my research analysis, I went from round asking my colleagues to help me out and none of them could help. The last option was to buy the application at an expensive price. When I got home, I was very tired, and I asked my daughter to call the person who was my last resort in finding the software. When I went to bed, my daughter figured out how to download the Application on my laptop and I was very pleased with her.

I highlighted the accomplishment and congratulated her for the surprise. I asked her ‘so what’ was I stressing over the application, she did not understand the ‘so what’ (the value) of her actions of downloading the application on my laptop. The ‘so what’ led me to understand that I had someone who knew how to get the application for me all along and yet I went round looking for someone to help me to get one.

**Conclusion**

After giving your answers, write 3 paragraphs summarizing what you learned in this exam and how you could apply the knowledge in your life and work.

This Critical Thinking exam has taught me that thinking can be taught and has a process that needs to be followed in order to achieve one’s goals. The Critical Thinking framework which involves the three-step process, clarity, conclusion and decision makes thinking easier and methodical than automatic thinking. Little did I know that thinking requires a process to follow, and it makes more sense using the framework.

In my line of work I do a lot of asking ‘why’, ‘because’ and ‘so what’ in clarifying, even when I usually did not know that it is easier to follow the three-step process. As a supervisor and role model, I mentor a lot of my subordinates who look up to me for guidance. In the few days that I have been Learning Critical Thinking, I have improved in my way of handling issues at the office, and I encourage my subordinates to also think critically before coming up with complaints by clarifying and conclusion.

I have on several occasions asked my subordinates ‘so what’ even when I had not learnt how to handle the responses. This course has motivated me to be asking more ‘why’ and ‘so what’ questions often. I would like to teach others to use the three-step process of the critical thinking and spend more time on clarity and conclusion. I have identified some of my subordinates who are in a habit of not using clarity and making decisions without conclusions in handling issues. As a Public Health major, this course has enhanced my skills in critical thinking which may go well with patience, a virtue that I possess, has increased my knowledge on how to deal with people from all works of life.

**Bibliography**

Kallet, M. (2014). *Critical Thinking to Improve Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Skills.* Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey.