Criterion referenced assessment: Using assessment criteria to grade student performance

**Text A**

Criterion referenced assessment means developing a set of criteria that describes the level of performance that needs to be met for a programme of study. Once the criteria have been developed, teachers/tutors can use them to assess informal and non-formal learning. This type of assessment is useful when compared with a test or examination (summative assessment) because, by having a set of points (or criteria) that each learner has to meet, tutors, teachers and assessors can all be sure that the same rules apply to everyone and no favour is shown to individual learners.

Where learning is taking place in informal settings, or in a range of different classrooms, workplaces, training venues etc., sharing the assessment criteria with learners before the assessment takes place, makes the learning requirements totally explicit to learners and teachers/tutors. Now, learners understand **what** they must demonstrate in their work, even though there are no restrictions on **how** they must demonstrate it – they have the freedom to show learning and behaviour relevant to the context where they are being assessed.

Another advantage of criterion referenced assessment is that, if learners perform self-assessment or peer assessment and use the criteria developed by the VET provider, it can develop their critical thinking skill and sharpen the judgements the make about their performance or their peers’ performance

Questions

1. What do you understand by ‘criterion referenced assessment’?
2. Why might teachers or VET organisations use criterion referenced assessment?
3. Give an example of when criterion referenced assessment could be used.
4. Why is it useful in such a situation?
5. Name one benefit of criterion referenced assessment.
6. Why might criterion referenced assessment be a fairer way of assessing young learners?
7. Give one more benefit of this system of assessing informal learning.
8. Who should develop a set of criteria to use for assessment?

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**Text B**

Criterion referenced assessment is when a learning provider, such as a VET organisation, develops a set of criteria to describes the level of performance that learners need to attain on a programme of study. Teachers, tutors and assessors can make use of criterion referenced assessment when assessing informal and non-formal learning.

The benefits for VET programmes are obvious. The vocational element of their programmes can take place in a very wide range of situations: workshops, kitchens, building sites, car repair outlets etc. Learners in these situations may need to demonstrate their competences in ways that are specific to where the learning takes place and criterion reference assessment can be flexible enough to accommodate this.

Unlike a test or examination which are formal, summative assessments, criterion referenced assessments, made up from a list of points (or criteria) that each learner has to meet, tutors, teachers and assessors can all be sure that the same rules apply to everyone and favour is not shown to individual learners.

In situations where peer assessment and self-assessment are used, the fact that the assessment criteria are shared with learners before the assessment takes place, means that there is a shared understanding between learners and assessors alike of what is to be assessed and what the standards should be. This can assist VET and other professionals in validating the work, experiences, behaviours and development of their learners. Similarly it can assist learners in ensuring that they complete a broad range of tasks or demonstrate a variety of behaviours that allow them to meet the criteria.

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