

introduction

educators worldwide are recognising the need to involve the learners in the assessment and evaluation process ...

After all, it doesn't really matter if the teacher and parent know a child's specific strengths and weaknesses. If our learners are not aware of where they are, where they need to go and how they can get there ... HOW WILL THEY GET THERE?

Criteria are commonly used with students in classrooms today. Unfortunately, all too often, the criteria have fallen short of achieving what they were designed to accomplish. Providing the learner with the opportunity to self-assess and evaluate using criteria is not enough. How often have we invited our learners to judge their work, only to ask afterwards, 'Has this child evaluated the same piece of work that I have just looked at?' Primary students will award themselves a smiley face or thumbs up for one of two reasons. First, because they want one! Second, they see their effort in a positive light if they worked hard. It matters little to them if that effort was directed in an entirely unfocused area, or if that effort did not address the required elements! This pattern is repeated at the secondary level.

Often, teachers provide a number scale as a guide: Content is worth 20, presentation 10, grammar, spelling and punctuation 10, etc. Although at first this approach may seem more specific, could we as teachers justify the difference between an 8 and an 8.5? A child may know that the top mark for presentation is 10, but does that knowledge alone enable the learner to achieve at that level?

We talk of the need for consistent judgments. That need is justified, but the approach we take in an effort to meet this challenge is not. Moderation is the universally accepted means of safeguarding against inconsistent judgments. Unfortunately, those condoning this practice have neglected to recognise that moderation deals only with the symptom of a much more fundamental problem... subjective and therefore ineffective criteria.

The first step toward developing criteria that are truly empowering for kids is recognising the inherent failings in the hundreds of criteria 'exemplars' available to teachers on the internet and through various publications. Nonetheless, identifying those failings is simple – the challenge is to address them.

And once we get the criteria right the challenge continues. How often do we find that a learner has set, recorded and filed a goal? Two weeks prior to a reporting period, teacher and student work tirelessly in an effort to meet the goal set months earlier. We talk of student responsibility and accountability, but do we walk this talk? We spend hours putting our lesson plans together. When we aren't creating the lesson plans we are marking them, when we aren't doing that we are writing the school report and then holding an interview with mum or dad while the learner is at home watching television...now that's responsible and accountable! It's no wonder we are exhausted! It's time to give the ownership back to the learner where it belongs...

Where Assessment Meets Thinking and Learning is for anyone who is eager to address the following...

- Subjective criteria
- Diluted criteria

- Superficial criteria
- Inconsistent judgments
- Required moderation
- Teacher ownership of the evaluative process
- Teacher ownership of school report development
- Teacher ownership of the parent interview
- The learner's lack of preparedness to write his own school report or hold his own parent interview
- The learner's lack of preparedness in identifying where he is, where he is going and how he will get there
- The learner's lack of preparedness in setting realistic, observable and measurable goals; self-monitoring these goals; recognising achievement against evidence; setting new goals; and repeating the process

baseline data

Educators who are serious about best practice can identify their skills, values and beliefs. They are willing and able to challenge these on a regular basis. They celebrate both their strengths and struggles and they see struggles as an exciting opportunity for growth and change.

With this in mind, it would be of great benefit for you to collect baseline data before engaging in the new ideas offered in this book. By identifying your foundational knowledge and skills, you will ready yourself for the reflection and challenge that promotes change. Most importantly, you will have the data necessary for the celebration that will come as you employ a new approach to assessment and evaluation.

Action

1. Collect, date and store a learning unit that you have designed and implemented with your students. Ensure that it demonstrates the way in which you currently connect your assessment and evaluation practice to the design of the learning opportunities you create.
2. If you are currently using criteria with your learners, select two or three pieces to include in your baseline collection. Ensure that each piece is dated. Include a reflection that indicates whether you created the criteria yourself or whether they were something designed by others.
3. Complete the organiser entitled Where Assessment Meets Thinking and Learning: Baseline Reflections. This organiser is provided on the accompanying CD-ROM. Enlarge the organiser onto an A3 sheet. This will provide the room required to really enable you to explore your thinking. Ensure that the organiser is dated and stored with the additional baseline evidence.

think!nQ – at a glance

strategic planning

- follow the *Clark 9 step planning process* (see Section Six).

Stage 1: Immersion (Free Immersion)



- immerse learners in the content, concepts, processes and skills; collect baseline data; include issues or further aspects which will engage learners both emotionally and cognitively; set up the 'what if challenge' so learners identify a *so what* to pursuing the learning. (Note: this is key to the entire framework and learners do not proceed with further stages until a *so what* has been established – how will the learner USE the new learning to make a difference in their life or the lives of others?) The *so what* may be individual or pursued as a class challenge.

Stage 2: Brainstorm and Question (Brainstorming and Wonderings)



- invite learners to brainstorm what they know about the focus challenge/s using a recording tool of their choice
- invite learners to determine what they will need to know. These wonderings may be incorporated into the class 'must do' inquiry question/s if engaging in a whole class inquiry, or learners may be provided an opportunity to pursue individual questions alongside the class question/s. Ensure that learners consider WHY they wish to investigate their question/s: 'How will this new learning make a difference in your life or the lives of others?' In directing learners in this regard, relevance is promoted and the *so what* is explicitly identified.

Note: the questions are strategic and relate directly to the so what established upon the conclusion of immersion. If I want to write a fairytale for children in Africa who have no access to literature, what do I know and what would I need to know to successfully achieve this?

Stage 3: Plan (Planning For Action)



- share with learners the *thinkbox* or *thinktower* classroom model indicating the types of thinking, thinking skills, thinking tools and thinking strategies that they will be introduced to during the inquiry process. Explain that once they develop their understanding of thinking they will use the *thinkbox* or *thinktower* models to plan with you. Eventually they will be provided with the opportunity to independently plan all of the tools for use in their personal inquiries, using the thinking framework of their choice

Stage 4: Investigate.Organise.Internalise (Rigorous Investigation)



- provide learners with a planner that outlines the entire learning journey – all steps should be clearly identified
- provide learners with criteria for their inquiry. This will include criteria for the content, skills and processes. Criteria should be formatted as a rubric (levelled expectations). Learners will reference criteria to self-evaluate prior to outside evaluation.
- provide learners with the learning and thinking tools associated with each of the areas of *thinkbox* (information, knowledge/comprehension, analysis, evaluation, synthesis). As each tool and/or strategy is used, each should be immediately identified on *thinkbox* and/or *thinktower*, as this will assist in making thinking explicit to the learner. The relationship between thinking skills, tools, strategies and the learning process will also become more

explicit. Informal internalisation time is provided at the end of each learning session. Learners are encouraged to record discoveries and wonderings within their learning journals. Target teaching is provided as required and regular debrief sessions are conducted to ensure accuracy and completeness of student-accessed information.

Stage 5: Stop and Think (What Do You Now Know?)



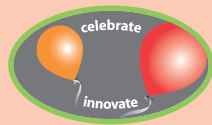
- internalise – invite learners to self-select a strategy and tool for internalisation of newly-accessed information. A lack of knowledge, confusion and/or misunderstanding should result in further investigation and/or target teaching before moving forward in the process.
- invite learners to self-select a strategy and tool for sharing their comprehension: What do you now know?

Stage 6: Ideate (Development of *so what* Idea and Communication Vehicle)



- invite learners to reconsider how they might USE their new learning to make a difference in their life or the lives of others. Learners may continue with their original idea as determined upon the conclusion of the immersion stage, or they may make modifications or include additional actions
- invite learners to determine a communication vehicle which will get their idea to an appropriate audience (this may result in an additional inquiry so that learners can generate criteria for their specific communication vehicle)
- direct learners to put their *so what* idea into action

Stage 7: Innovate and Celebrate (Celebrate and Validate the Learning Journey)



- direct learners to trial and monitor the results of their *so what*
- invite learners to celebrate the learning journey while waiting to identify if their *so what* idea made the intended difference
- develop and implement a three part celebration that includes:
 - formal sharing
 - informal sharing
 - social time

Stage 8: Evaluate (Track Thinking and Learning Process and Set Goals)



- direct learners to track (underline) the thinking skills, tools and strategies used during the inquiry on their *thinkbox/thinktower* framework
- invite learners to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their thinking tool selections and set goals for improving their thinking during their next inquiry (using the *S.W.SW* tool)
- invite learners to identify the strengths and weaknesses experienced during each stage of the *Clark think!nQ real learning process* (using the *S.W.SW* tool)
- guide learners to set goals for reference during their next inquiry (using the *S.W.SW* tool)

thinking and learning

Thinking, learning and assessment are three parts of an inseparable whole. We cannot examine one element without examining its relationship to the other two, nor can we introduce one independent of the others. Effective assessment practices must be infused seamlessly into the design and delivery of curriculum. A pedagogical approach built on teaching learners how to think and how to learn will be reflected in both the design of the criteria and their implementation.

The true power of criteria will only be realised when it is understood and addressed in the context of the bigger whole. With your foundation now in place, let's begin our exploration into 'real assessment'.

specific

The use of non-specific quantitative and qualitative language within the design of criteria must be challenged. I cannot over-emphasise the need for educators to recognise this and rectify it. It is this non-specific quantitative and qualitative language that results in our international need for moderation – a costly exercise in terms of money and time for all involved.

When making criteria specific, both quantity and quality must be addressed. The following examples demonstrate the common use of subjective language that results in confusion and inconsistency.

QUANTITATIVE Subjective

• personal opinion	1	or	• I made some spelling mistakes
• some factual information	3		• I made a few grammatical errors
• lots of factual information	5		• I had minor problems with referencing

QUALITATIVE Subjective

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I developed a reasonable argument • my feature was fairly interesting • my fact/opinion supported my argument well • I used an attention-grabbing introduction which linked to some extent to the conclusion • I had a fluent style
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quantity-specific

Quantitative statements such as ‘few’, ‘some’ or ‘lots’ are actually quite easily rectified. Simply decide what a few represents and record it overtly.

Quantitative <i>Subjective</i>		Quantitative <i>Objective</i>	
• personal opinion	1	• personal opinion is provided, statements such as ‘I believe’ or ‘I think’ are used, no evidence is provided to support	1
• some factual info	3	• 1–2 facts are provided, each fact is supported with one or two examples of evidence	2
• lots of factual info	5	• 3–4 facts are provided, each fact is supported with three examples of evidence	3