

Unfair Criteria Sheets in Schools – By James Fuller

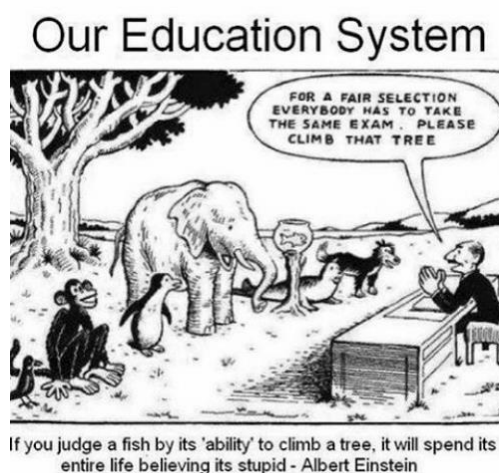


The Centre for PEACE
Research and Development

The interpretation of a few key terms should not be the basis for human education. Current criteria sheets (Appendix 1.) demand subjective interpretation of descriptors, core curriculum elements and cognitive verbs.

Something needs to change, urgently!

It has been proposed that schools shift to an explicit, itemised criteria sheet for students (Appendix 2.) Current criteria sheets only allow for students with quality interpretation/inferencing skills that align with the subjectivity of their teacher/faculty head to achieve high standards.



While I acknowledge that a more explicit criteria sheet is tending toward spoon-feeding students, it will create a more even 'playing field' and encourage more students to deeply engage in assessment - Identifying *specific requirements* will add clarity for extension students and support for the strugglers.

Argument 1:

"I appreciate that it's unfair that the ability to interpret determines grades, but is that actually the case? The teacher is the conduit between ACARA/QCAA curriculum and students. How they choose to be that conduit is guided by the APST and school-determined priorities."

Teachers spend much of their lessons instructing students by modelling explicit instruction, scaffolding and templates (audibly and visually). Teachers spend much of their meeting time in collaboration/moderation/calibration/informal discussion/PD to get on the same page. This is because the wording on the criteria sheet is not easily understood.

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I reiterate my argument that it is unfair to rely on the interpretation skills of teachers and students when addressing criteria – the current system masquerades as subjective and individualised - but teachers are expected to deliver a mostly quantitative curriculum that feeds an *economically driven* industry (It's all data based). This situation creates an inequitable education system.

There must be a shift to providing a formula for holistic success. Criteria sheets must include explicit requirements, or the education system is guilty of withholding vital information and limiting student potential.

Simply shifting to an explicit criteria will keep **everyone** accountable - from the student to the government. This will enhance the opportunity for creativity and cognitive growth because the over-intense pressure of the interpretive grading system will be reduced, and teachers and students can explore their genius under more profound pressures (self-determined, teacher guided).

Furthermore, there will always remain gaps in interpretation of the requirements when it comes to content, structure, choice of mode and mediums. The elements that must be explicit are the fundamental inclusions. This information is imperative to equality and priming students for success.

Argument 2:

“For the ‘Knowledge Application’ criteria, we defined key terms (perspectives, representations) and cognitions (analyse, evaluate). We’ve worked through the retrieval chart, where the questions have guided their analysis. When they evaluate, they know that there needs to be a criteria on which they base their judgement. The criteria we’ve been discussing is whether the representations/perspectives are accurate, and if the text has a positive or negative impact on the target audience, and the community at large.”

While I agree with this argument, these things need to be taught explicitly in the classroom (repeatedly and consistently) because at the heart of education philosophy is: humans are programmed by language and observational experiences (especially words). The cognitive verbs mentioned in argument 2 should remain included in the criteria sheet but the specific, refined requirements must accompany them (They are more important).

We must think of the big picture - students need to get to the graduation stage at school and have impressive skills (critical and creative) to be competitive in the workforce.

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Explicit teaching strategies provide a straight line to successful outcomes. A straight line is far more efficient than a blurred line, which is the current interpretive criteria sheet.

Comprehensive programs already exist that can resolve these issues but no one I know seems to want to correct the system.

Something needs to change - some people make the system sound so lovely and altruistic, when in fact the current system is a monster.

Appendix 1: EXAMPLE - Current Criteria Sheet

	STANDARD A	STANDARD B	STANDARD C
Knowledge Application	Discerning analysis and evaluation of perspectives and representations present within a particular trend	Effective analysis and evaluation of perspectives and representations present within a particular trend	Appropriate analysis and evaluation of perspectives and representations present within a particular trend
	Identification and thorough explanation of the ways cultural assumptions, attitudes, values and beliefs underpin and shape representations of identities, places, events and/or concepts within the trend	Identification and relevant explanation of the ways cultural assumptions, attitudes, values and beliefs underpin and shape representations of identities, places, events and/or concepts within the trend	Identification of the ways cultural assumptions, attitudes, values and beliefs underpin and shape representations of identities, places, events and/or concepts within the trend

Appendix 2: Proposed Criteria Sheet

	STANDARD A	STANDARD B	STANDARD C
Knowledge and Application	<p>Analysis and evaluation of perspectives: (Discerning)</p> <p>Identification of a range (3 or more) of perspectives in the texts that reflect the values, attitudes and beliefs that define the trend, but also those that may oppose, reject or reinforce the perspectives within the trend.</p> <p>Inclusions of deeper knowledge regarding the origin of the trend and a projection of the cultural impact on specific people and places.</p>	<p>Analysis and evaluation of perspectives: (Effective)</p> <p>Trend explicitly identified, texts explicitly identified. Analysis includes effective evaluation (informative, humorous, persuade) on the impact of the trend in society and how each text influences beliefs, attitudes and values from at least two different perspectives.</p> <p>Express thorough understanding of how a trend can shape specific people and places.</p>	<p>Analysis and evaluation of perspectives: (Appropriate)</p> <p>Identification of perspectives in the texts that reflect the values, attitudes and beliefs that define the trend.</p> <p>Expression of general understanding about how and why trends occur, and what impact they have on people and places associated with the trend.</p>