Strengths and limitations of assessment methods essay sample

Psychology

There is a large variety of assessment methods available for assessing learners' achievements. These include observation; questioning the learner; examining product evidence; discussion; witness testimony; looking at learner statements; recognising prior learning; simulated environment; skills tests; oral and written examinations; assignments; case studies and projects. Choosing the most appropriate assessment methods is vitally important, to help and support the learner and to ensure the job of the assessor is as straightforward, reliable and problem-free as possible. In selecting methods of assessment the main aim is to choose methods that most effectively assess the objectives of the immediate area of study, whilst considering the broader aims of the programme. For example, the choice of assessment methods may include supporting the development of vocational competencies (such as team skills). There should be a carefully planned assessment strategy across any programme. It is not possible to use only a single assessment method to assess effectively.

Observation

Observation is a commonly used assessment method where the assessor observes the learner completing a task. The assessment criteria can be set in advance.

StrengthsLimitations

1. Can be used at any time in the classroom, in the workplace (allowing for collaboration with colleagues, and giving a ' real' practice context, if appropriate) or in a simulated learning environment 2. Reliable, because the assessor can readily observe that the candidate is working independently (or

working with others, as appropriate) 3. Fair, because the assessor can devote a similar amount of time to each candidate 4. Can be used to easily collect evidence of competence across a wide range of routine work activities 5. Can be better suited to a candidate who would find it difficult to produce written evidence 6. Allows for testing of complex integrated skills1. In the workplace – it can be complicated to set up

2. Can be time-consuming and costly

3. Can involve unplanned, uncontrolled events

4. The challenge of making an accurate record of the ' event', to prevent unfair test conditions and ensure consistency 5. Simply watching a candidate performing a task would not necessarily reflect their knowledge in other areas, for example regarding legislation. In this case a more effective assessment method should be included, such as questioning.

Questioning

Questioning is a method of testing knowledge by asking the learner a series of questions related to the performance criteria. It is important that the assessor plans the questions beforehand, ensuring that open questions are used, and identifies the means of recording them, whether it be written; voice recorded or videoed. Questioning can be a very useful assessment method used alongside other methods. With observation, in particular, ' what if' questions can be used for evidence that might be hard to obtain, for example. StrengthsLimitations

1. The assessor can elicit further information and check that the candidate has understood the assessment fully, particularly if they have not given full

answers 2. The assessor can gain an immediate answer, checking that the required standards have been met 3. More reliable that an unstructured oral test or discussion 4. Can be used to address any ' gaps' in the evidence of candidates' knowledge1. Can cause the candidate anxiety 2. May advantage candidates with strong verbal skills and comfort with speaking 3. To ensure consistency, requires training in interviewing skills and rating scales 4. In the case of videoing evidence, in particular, can be costly and time-consuming

Examining Product Evidence

Product evidence can involve a work sample provided by the candidate or a collection of materials that present and verify skills and knowledge, in the form of a portfolio. StrengthsLimitations

1. Provides evidence which anyone can examine

2. Is a lasting record of competence

3. Enables reflection on learning

4. Provides a real life context

5. Direct, practical and learner-centred1. It is important that all candidates have access to the same instructions and resources 2. Does not allow for process observation

3. May favour candidates with strong writing skills, particularly in the case of a portfolio 4. May provide a barrier to learning for a candidate with poor writing skills 5. There is a question as to whether the fact someone can write about how they carry out a task proves that they can perform that task in an actual practical situation

Case Studies and Projects

Case studies are student centred activities based on topics that demonstrate theoretical concepts in an applied setting, as is project-based learning. A project could include workbooks, assignments, research tasks and products.

StrengthsLimitations

1. Encourages active learning

2. Bridges the gap between theory and practice; applying principles to real-life situations 3. Increases the candidates' enjoyment of the topic, providing relevance, and hence increases their desire to learn 4. Provides an opportunity for the development of key skills, such as communication, group work and problem solving 5. Provides useful information for formative assessment purposes1. Design and marking of project-based work can be time-consuming 2. Unsuitable where criteria for assessment of correct or successful answers are unclear or contestable 3. The level of detail has to be addressed carefully, avoiding ' padding' whilst not being too sparse 4. Requires a degree of sophistication on the part of the candidate