

**2019 Teaching and Learning Conference**

**INSPIRE | TRUST | EDUCATE**

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## Keynote Presentation

Learning vs Assessment – If our Goal is to Help Students Learn, Why Does the VET System Focus on Assessment?

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# **Learning vs assessment**

**- if our goal is to help students learn, why does the VET system focus on assessment**

Anni YARINGA

# Strange but true...

## In the Standards for RTOs (2015)

- Training is mentioned 133 times
- Training and assessment = 79 times
- Training organisation = 27 times
- Trainer = 28 times
  
- Assessment = 114 times
- Assessor = 37 times

And yet, the only part of an audit  
against the Standards  
that measures training,  
focuses on 'amount of training'  
not quality of training.

I propose that the role of an RTO is to provide the environment in which individuals can develop skills and knowledge, and learn how to apply them in the context of their industry or profession.

I further propose that the role of an RTO includes gathering evidence and certifying that learning has been demonstrated

(ie measured against the standard described by industry in the form of competencies)

Who has done a questionnaire  
to determine their  
“preferred learning style”  
and can tell me the outcome?

**Social Concrete Inter-personal Divergent**  
**Learning Style Models**  
**Accommodating Random Aural Linguistic**

**Pragmatic**  
**VAK**  
**Spatial**

**Visual**  
**Kolb**  
**Theorist**

**Logical**  
**4MAT**  
**Kinaesthetic**

**Convergent**  
**Felder-**  
**silverman**  
**Sequential**

**Solitary**  
**Gregorc**  
**Reflective**

**Activist**  
**HBDI**  
**Assimilator**



Stand if you have ever had to learn any two or more of the following.

- First Aid
- A trade skill
- A theory-based subject
- The application of concepts
- Problem solving

*Remain standing* if you used the same learning methods for each.

- First Aid
- A trade skill
- A theory-based subject
- The application of concepts
- Problem solving

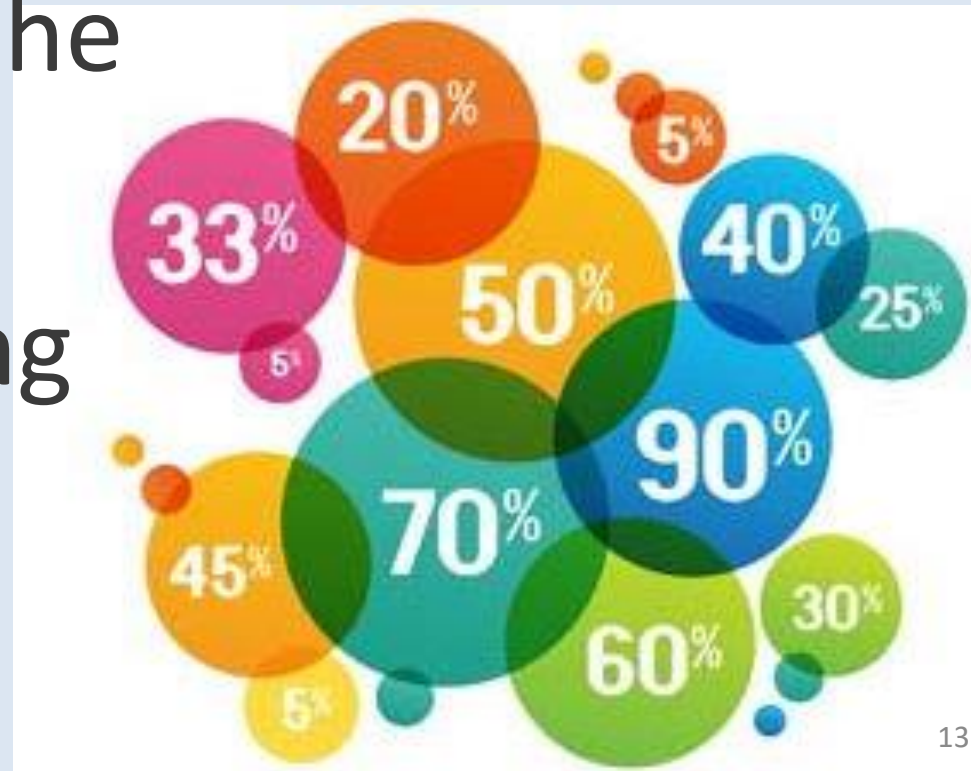
Put your hand up if you would approach learning in the same way in each of these contexts

- Workplace learning
- Online learning
- Self-paced learning
- In-class learning
- Lectures

So...

- in any group of learners there will be a range of preferred learning styles
- different subject matter requires a different learning approach
- different contexts require a different learning approach

To what extent would you attribute the success of learning (by a student) on the efforts of the teacher/trainer during the learning process?



To what extent would you attribute the outcome of an assessment on the efforts of the assessor during the assessment process?



If you struggled to decide extent of the assessor's influence, imagine yourself doing...

- essay
- role play
- case study
- workplace project
- short answer questions
- practical demonstration of skills

**What difference would the assessor make during the event?**

# My point?

The success of learning is strongly influenced by the efforts and presence of the teacher/trainer

The outcome of assessment is not so strongly influenced by the efforts and presence of the assessor



Although it's during learning that we have the most potential to make a difference, it's ***not*** possible and ***not*** desirable to standardise the way teachers and trainers interact with learners

To do so would mean  
ignoring the complexity of learning  
and the role of the teacher/trainer

On the other hand  
...it *is* possible and *is* desirable to  
standardise assessment processes

We can't measure and/or compare  
the quality of learning processes

We have developed (imperfect)  
ways to compare/measure the  
quality of assessment processes

Our measures are based on the assumption that a “good” assessment is one that meets the

- Principles of assessment, and

- Rules of evidence, and

...addresses factors relating to the purpose and context of the assessment

Our measures are also based on the assumption that a “good” assessor is one that has completed the Certificate IV in Training & Assessment or the Skills Set for Assessors

Back to the original question...

If our goal is to help students learn,  
why does the VET system focus on assessment?

I've proposed one reason

- we think we can measure the quality of assessment but we know we can't measure the quality of teaching or training

There are other reasons.

- If the system specifies a standard of teaching/training, it must accept that achievement of that standard will result in more time spent on delivery (ie increase costs)
- Industry is primarily interested in the outcome of the training – competence – not how it is achieved



ASQA audits indicate that we (collectively) are not yet getting assessment right.

Given the variables involved in teaching/training, would we have any better outcome if we were able to measure delivery?

Personally, I'm glad the system is currently focussed on assessment.

I don't have confidence that the current decision-makers would be able to come up with an appropriate framework for measuring quality of delivery.

However, given how significantly they can influence learning, I believe we should be doing more to prepare teachers/trainers for their role.

A Certificate IV (regardless of the content) is not sufficient.

But that's another conversation...



Thank you

...for your time and attention