VET Assessment: a student perspective

Larry Smith
University of New England
Berwyn Clayton
Victoria University
Focus

- Four studies on the ‘lived’ experiences of students in VET
- Collation of student insights into the nature, effectiveness and perspectives of informal and formal assessment processes
Value of student perspectives

- Learners are in a unique and powerful position to comment on relevance and quality

- Increasingly responsibility for learning for work rests with the learner

- Acknowledgement of learner experiences and perspectives a key in design, development and implementation of quality assessment
Adult learners are more likely to respond to assessment processes that provide ‘internal’ motivation.

Internal motivators – self-esteem, recognition, increased job satisfaction and the greater self-confidence that attaches to achieving success (Knowles 1990)
Methodology

- Data drawn from 4 separate research studies
- Collected through semi-structured interviews
- A purposive sample of 132 current or past VET students with ‘mixed’ backgrounds from both public and private training providers
- Involved secondary data analysis (re-analysis of existing data)
- Identification of major themes – related issues, perspectives
Reasons for quality assessment

- Necessary to attain a formal qualification
- Ensures achievement of competencies expected/desired by employers
- Enhances self-perceptions as learners
- Improves the quality of the learning experience
Views on formal assessment

- Excessive emphasis on summative assessment
- Over-assessment, with minimal time to practice
- Written assessment a common assessment strategy
Views on formal assessment

- Assessment decisions made on the basis of ability to write
- Concerns about the degree of consistency across training providers and trainers
- Lack of grading considered a major disincentive for “striving for excellence”
Non–formal and informal: RPL

- Difficulty in reading understanding and completing RPL documentation
- Concerns about lack of rigor and staff disinterest in RPL
- RPL evidence requirements seen to be excessive
Non–formal and informal: RPL

- Industry currency/credibility of assessors questioned
- Validity of assessing learning via written assessments and simulations
- RPL evidence requirements seen to be excessive
Conclusions

- Assessment critical process for giving public and industry credibility to qualifications

- Assessment is a major motivator for learning and self-esteem

- Requires a greater focus on quality rather than quantity of evidence

- Inconsistencies generate concerns around credibility of learning outcomes and qualifications
Conclusions

- Self-reflection is a powerful process for identifying and validating learning outcomes.
- The link between assessment, self-perception as a learner and motivation to learn needs to be further explored.
- Collecting, analysing and acting upon feedback from learners about the quality of assessment is critically important but seemingly undervalued in the system.