

## **Scope of this Submission**

My name is Michael Minns

Since 1983 I have worked as a Human Resources Consultant with an emphasis on training, learning and skills development in the private sector.

My company was formed in 1983 and it is call Michael Minns Human Resources Pty Ltd [www.mmhr.biz](http://www.mmhr.biz)

Previously I have worked in industry training roles and prior to that I worked for three years in the Victorian TAFE system and two years before in the Papua New Guinea Technical Education system.

I have a wide range of experiences and I am well qualified to make comment. Please see the appendix

My observations, comments, opinions are primarily centred around those activities which commenced in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea some 34 years ago.

I am not commenting on the TAFE system or the International Student sector.

My comments in the main are confined to the private sector and the origins of the privatisation

An outline of my qualifications and training as well as my roles in adult education are found in the appendixes

In the main I rely on my own personal experiences and I am grateful for the opportunity to attempt to put the system right.

## **A Starting Point**

The starting point of this discussion is that in 1989/90, the then Labour Government under the then Minister for Employment Education and Training the Hon. John Dawkins AO with all the best of intent and all goodwill but with very little factual substance and thought and without paying credence to the research that lay before them, privatised training in Australia and the consequences of which is that for the last 20 years training in Australia has been going backwards.

My research concludes that it was commissioned for a number of reasons that had little to do with the original intent.

These reasons include; that the rest of the world is going in this direction and that it represented an opportunity for industrial peace a major political goal at the time. That is, it would placate the unions because it offered them an opportunity for their members to receive incremental pay rises according to skills acquired.

The end result is that these people reinvented history. They ignored theories and practices of vocational training, competency based training that had been in existence since World War Two.

Why is it so? You might ask.

The root cause of the problems was that the decision making processes was dominated by politicians and their administrators who in practice had not had a real job plus Union Officials whose only mission was to get a pay rise for their members.

During this time the training level guarantee was adopted and formed part of this movement. However it was scrapped when entrepreneurial training organizations offered Train the Trainer courses in the Maldives or Presentation Skills Training in the Caribbean that coincided with the West Indies versus Australia cricket test match.

## **RTO's**

This structural change gave rise to the birth of the Registered Training Organizations, RTO's, who, just as the justice system is not about fairness and equity, are not about needs based training, rather it's about potential profit and record keeping and above all audit survival.

The obsession with profit or, to be more correct, potential profit is even embodied in the Issues Paper dated June 2010, page eighteen.

*"For example, the learning may allow previous untapped markets (including overseas), to be accessed profitably".*

These comment in the Issue Paper sets off an alarm bell inside me.

1. Would the public service like to be a member of private enterprise?
2. Does the public service wish to be an active participant or a policy maker and regulator?

Confusion about their role prevails

These committees completely ignored what has been learned about vocational training, they have reinvented history, and they have ignored creditable educational research and sound practices.

Yet all of this was before them.

They re-jigged terminology, ignored important components of a whole and complete concept. They tried to reinvent the wheel very poorly.

For example,

They believe that “skills and knowledge” are the only competencies that exist. This is exemplified by my experience with a Union official as follows.

*“You will have a hard time convincing me as a National AWU Officer and the rest of the Australian Worker’s Union that attitude is competency”*

This is entrenched re-jigging of the definition of a competency is also found in Recommendation 1 of 24 ,Final Report of the Joint Steering Committee of the NQC and the COAG Skills Workshop Development Submission -June 2009

It states

“That the NQC Revise the definition of competency as Follows:

*Competency is the consistent application of knowledge and skills to the standard of performance required in the workplace. It embodies the ability to transfer and apply skills and knowledge to new situations and environments.”*

My own personal view is that this is way off the mark and it is part of and adds too the confusion that is found in industry.

For this to work and I am a supporter of the intent but a critic of the implementation and practice, there must be;

1 Preciseness in the terms used so that only one meaning can be assigned to a word

2 There must be order and consistency of the end product or we have to deal with chaos which is what we have now

3 All of the systems members must have the same common goal.

If we fail to meet these qualities we have misinterpretation, chaos and competing agendas

## **A Fellow Supporter**

Doctor Phil Rutherford, who has a great deal of international VET experience, whose PhD thesis was an investigation of VET systems in Australia, found that of the 96 training packages that he examined, 60% of the skills and knowledge required in the work place do not come from a training package. Further, he offers, that this is the reason why many work place trainers do not use them.

The defence offered by those on the other side of the desk is that there is potential for the contextualisation of the package. It is a defence that has very little practical applications.

However it is the new buzz word in the New South Wales Department of Primary Industry Mines Inspectors is “contextualisation.”

‘Has the training been contextualised?’ is a question in their tick and flick audit system

Yet it is my experience that there is little contextualisation many trainer don’t know what the word means

For example;

On a number of occasions I have witnessed Cert IV Training and Development Instructors conducting skill sessions on such difficult exercises and complex tasks as; making a cup of coffee or tying a reef knot.

I view this as a complete waste of time and money practically when there are many more ‘needs of the business’ opportunities available.

It is interesting to note that the person who presided over the privatisation of training in Australia in 1990 has been appointed as the Chair of the National Quality Council to oversee the VET sector. Back to the future one might say.

He is also the Chair of the AAQF Council which in itself throws light on the question of why these mistakes have been perpetuated.

## **More about RTO's**

Private sector and public sector RTO's have a lot to answer for in regard to industry training.

For example,

When an RTO Business Development Manager walks into an organization and makes representations to those that make the decisions he is often asked;

***“Why should we engage you?”***

Or

***“What is in it for us?”***

There are two stock standard responses.

1 *Your people will have a Nationally Accredited Qualification”*

2 *The Government will subsidise the training to the amount of...”*  
(Usually an amount of five thousand dollars.)

Thus the training that occurs will be beneficial to the trainee when he applies for his/her next job and the training is not based on the needs of the business.

Thus it comes nowhere near addressing the skill shortages of the client.

In the second instance, an economic imperative strongly influences the decision of whether to train or not and not the needs of the business. That is dollars and the bottom line rather than skills shortages are the prime reason for the training to occur

I am sure that this is not the intended outcome.

I have in my 27 years as a consultant I have been able to convince three Senior General Managers that they should not partake in a system that trains their workers for their next job and they should concentrate in training their current workers according to the needs of the business that they are managing.

I have also observed that when the second response is offered and accepted that this decision is usually symptomatic of a much deeper and more insidious problem in the organization. That is, one of financial stress and invariably it only prolongs the inevitable demise of this organization.

I have a problem when the sole intention and duty of the AQTF is to provide registration and audit of training providers. A more superior approach of economic rationalism in a free market is a better route to pursue.

For example, if training fails to meet the company's expectation, let the free market decide whether they survive.

Government subsidies distort the market and provide survival that shouldn't be so.

The current situation is like having a roof without walls.

It is due to the fact that the notion and the intent of providing better training in the private sector has been implemented by persons that have ulterior motives and different agendas.

Those who through lack of competence want to reinvent history, change the time honoured underlying research and other research based practices, thus serving and servicing sectionalised interests.

The Australian market has been flooded by over 6,000 RTO's who, collectively, are not doing a very good job. Their purposes are at odds with the original intent of a greater and more efficient productivity through providing a better trained and ready workforce.

It is interesting to note the number of chartered firms that have ventured into the RTO sector this is fairly typical income gouging behaviour of chartered firms as they see it as just another way of making more money out of their existing customers. In board meetings they call it open cut mining. To me, being a chartered accounting firm is at odds with being an RTO.

RTO's should be single purpose organizations without the potential for internal and external conflict.

I do not think that Universities and TAFE colleges should have RTO's. This is a public service and private enterprise conflict where most of the cost associated with the RTO is cross subsidised by public funds.

There should be a complete review and revisit of the whole system and tough decisions need to be made. We need to strip away the economic imbalances that drive irrational decisions.



## How could we have done it better?

There is a better way.

Firstly; competency based training is not the sole province of universities or industry peak association or of politicians.

It has been around for a long time and has touched everybody in the community by and large.

Consider the following scenario.

*You're about to take a plane flight from say Sydney to Canberra. You board the plane and take your seat and tighten your safety belt. Then over the speaker a voice says*

***“Good morning ladies and gentlemen. This is your Captain speaking. We are about to be in Canberra in 55 minutes. Just for a matter of interest, I would like to share with you a number of personal matters. I've just graduated from a flying school. I've passed well. I got 85 % for take offs but only 75 % for landings”.***

How would you feel if you were on the plane?

Clearly, the flying school is not a competency based training establishment and CBT has been around for a lot longer than 1990

So where do we go now?

1. How could it have happened?
2. Where did it go wrong?
3. How can we fix it?
4. What are the consequences of doing nothing?

I have attempted to explain how this situation came about and where it went wrong; too many agendas, a government hell bent for industrial peace and incompetent or more likely no designers

The consequences of not doing anything about fixing the system which is akin to having a roof without walls are as the following.

1. Ineffective training at an industrial level.
- 2 Money continued to be wasted
- 3 Poor training
- 4 Lack of understanding of the concepts.
- 5 Manpower shortages
- 6 Continued skills shortages
- 7 Economic distortions

## **Back to the basic concepts and first principles**

Competency based training is not new so the starting point should be when Benjamin S. Bloom began developing the concept of mastering learning.

This is a concept that says that everyone can learn provided they have appropriate learning conditions and further; that learning was a sequence of learning stages, that is, we learn our two times tables before we learn our four times table and so on.

We learn one piece of information mastering that and then what follows is better performance in the next and the following sequence of tasks.

Bloom also proffered that there were three learning domains.

1 Psychomotor Domain: (read **skills**)

2 Cognitive Domain: (read **knowledge**)

3 Effective Domain; (read **attitude**)

Within these domains there are further progressive divisions and together are known as Blooms Taxonomy of Learning

It is interesting to note that this work appeared in 1956, that is 24 years before the Australian Government had a tilt at reinventing history, re-jigging titles and terms and espoused the "Not invented here syndrome"

Bloom characterised school learning and designed a model found on page 18 of Human Characteristics and School Learning and reproduced in the appendix of this submission.

I have adapted this model to explain competency based learning where time taken to learn is variable and achievable is fixed.

Malcolm Knowles is a well known contributor to principles of adult learning and he distinguished by definition the differences between schools based learning and adult learning

These definitions are:

Pedagogy: The art and science of teaching children.

Andragogy: The art and science of helping adults learn.

These are important distinctions between teacher centred learning and learner centred learning.

Robert F. Mager in 1975 published Preparing Instructional Objectives which formulated the method of describing desired outcomes using three elements, performance, conditions and criteria.

To illustrate by example what this means

“After reading this submission without interruption, you will be able to identify (recall) the primary reasons why industrial VET is in such disarray.

Another and more latter contributors to the paradigm are Spencer and Spencer who in 1993, P9 defined a competency as follows.

*“A competency is the underlying characteristic of an individual that is causally related to criteria reference effective and/or superior performance in a job or situation.”*

Further, there are five types of competencies, motives, traits, self concept, knowledge and skills.

See the Appendix for an expanded view of this definition and the handouts that I have used in training.

A well known International Management Consultancy tried to ban this text from the Australian market as it has content that may have threatened their propriety Points Score Evaluation System which is used by large firms to determine their salary scheme. The book is not available in Australia however it can be purchased on EBay

When understanding these works by these learned educators, it seems to be an incredible to think that the departure that incurred in 1990 even happened.

It is like an own goal against the run of play.

The time line is; Post World War II reconstruction, Mastery Learning in 1956 , Preparing Instructional Objectives in 1975, Bloom in 1976, Spencer and Spencer in 1993.

This begs the question “How do we find ourselves in the mess we are now.” Again; they redefined history and they have caused economic distortion in the market. It lacks contextualisation. They’re training people for the next job and the training is not directed at the needs of the business.

However the biggest mistake and the missing link in the whole process seems to be the lack of educational/training design conducted by subject matter experts and design professionals. The design of the training package is probably at the epicentre of the faults to the system.

In my research for the answers to this quandary reveals that there is no evidence of any systematic, step by step process of job or task analysis.

In fact the converse is true; training and competency committees are made up of people who lack the experience and /or qualification in the subject matter and /or training skills or education design skills and experience that are required to deliver the end product.

One more time; Union Officials, Personnel Administrators, Industry Organisation representatives make up and dominate majority of Industry Training Panels

## **Training and Educational Design**

The following are illustrations that exemplify this lack of fundamental understanding,

Taken from the training package;

***Foster and promote an inclusive learning culture.***

What does this mean?

Has there ever been an exclusive learning culture?

What is a learning culture...?

Is it the responsibility of the trainee or collectively the trainees?

Distant learning institutes are exclusive rather than inclusive.

Another example;

Cert IV Surface Coal Mining,

***Apply and monitor environmental management policy, plans and procedures.***

Is this the role of a mining supervisor?

If we can ignore for a moment the mistakes made in setting up the structure of the committee and focus on how the causes, it is revealed that on most occasions subject matter of experts were not consulted in developing the curriculum.

There are a number of ways that this could and should have occurred. These are time tested scientific methods of curriculum design

DACUM, (Develop a Curriculum) is an occupational analysis aimed to developing and training curriculum. The ILO uses this methodology at low cost and it uses ten to fifteen subject matter experts in a workshop situation they describe and agree on the

skills and knowledge and attitudes required to complete a task or a series of tasks.

Dacum is my favoured methodology. The one that I learned from my Head of School at Collinwood who was sent by the Victorian Technical Education Department to Canada to learn it, to bring it and teach it.

Functional Analysis. This is the preferred method of Dr Phil Rutherford who is mentioned elsewhere in this submission. He argues that this is the only appropriate method for identifying the skills and knowledge needed for the functions being analysed

Instructional Design is about breaking tasks into sub tasks and strategises the best way that may be considered to meet the demands and deliver the learning. It was designed in the US by the US Military after World War Two and rose from the need to up skill large numbers of people.

## **PRL, RCC**

One of the glaring points of inconsistency and confusion in regard to the issues of the current system is the issue of recognition of prior learning and the recognition of current competencies.

From a trainee's point of view, the process of recognition and current competency is one that is easily resolved. For example in the mining industry there is a concept of the challenge test for operators and the concept that I introduced some 20 years ago in the coal industry. When a person presents themselves as having a competency in a certain operating of a certain piece of equipment they are challenge tested, that is, the question of "please show me" is asked, That is ; "here is the machine that you say that you are competent in operating please demonstrate it against these objectives.

Many RTO's are reluctant to bestow RPL and RCC on their students and it is only when they realise that they will not be income deprived by doing so that there is a positive resolution.

However on the other side of the desk these issues are not so clear.

I hold a Diploma of Technical Teaching, a UG2 award from what is now the University of Melbourne.

When I take it to an RTO and other training organisations they have no idea of the strength of my award when in fact it is a two year trained (UG2) award .

I have heard similar stories of my fellow Diploma (UG2) holding colleagues; one who now works at a university in Melbourne has had an outright refusal by the Principal of his college to transfer the Diploma TT to the VET system. Yet according to the diagram on page 5 of the public issues paper the position is clear.

I have also heard of a TAFE teacher in New South Wales some 25 years on the job who retired and sought part time work at the same TAFE College after retirement was told that he needed a Cert IVT&D before he could be employed on a casual or part time basis. A clear misuse of the system.

### **The Context of this Submission**

The issues of context of this submission to the issues paper needs to be addressed.

1 The current system is incorrectly designed and thus dysfunctional

2 The current system is effective and does not deliver the promise that was intended

3 Business Development Managers from RTO's promote programs on the basis of

a) a Government subsidy,

b) Transferability of the qualification.

None of these reasons address productivity or business needs or the expansion of the current workplace skills



4 RPL and RCC should extend to trainers and this will provide an inexpensive method of increasing the pool of trainers.

5 There is a lack of equality with an RTO and if they didn't have the Government subsidy behind them, they would be out of work.

6 There is a complete lack of research and design and construction of the training package leading to loss of credibility.

7 There is an economic distortion in the market place in the system.

### **Recommendations**

- 1 Start again or at least do a green field exercise with T&D
- 2 Get hold of the country's best course designers, put them in a room with subject matter experts; not public servant not HR Administrators not Union officials and bit by bit work through the programs and change the system.
- 3 If you disbelieve me then conduct some research of your own with the clients of the system not those that have a vested interest in the survival of the current system

Thank you again for this opportunity

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## **Qualifications of Michael Minns**

*Wollongong Technical College.*

Electrical Fitter and Trades Course Mechanic Certificate.  
Advanced Electrical Drawing Certificate.  
Supervision Certificate.  
Electrical Engineering Certificate.

### Higher Education

Bachelor of Arts. UofQ majors; Economics ,Education.  
Diploma of Technical Teaching. UG2. SCVH.  
Cert IV Training and Development, University of Melbourne.

### Vocational Licences

Electrician's Licence New South Wales.  
Electrical A Grade Electrical Mechanic Victoria.  
Electrician's Licence PNG.  
Licence to present Cert III&II T&D OLI Queensland TAFE

### Further Education.

Train the Trainer NSW.AIM.  
Managing the Training Function NSW.AIM.  
Cert III T&D Open Learning Institute Queensland TAFE.  
Cert II T&D Open Learning Queensland TAFE.

### Leadership Roles in Vocational Education.

Senior Subject Master Port Moresby Technical College.  
PNG Teachers Association Rep PNG National Education Board.  
President of Students Union of State College of Victoria.  
Instructor Collingwood TAFE.  
President of the Hills Day and District Evening College. (ACE)

### Industrial Experience.

Training Manager Atlas Copco.  
Training Manager Clearview Group of Companies  
Human Resources Consultant Web site [www.mmhr.biz](http://www.mmhr.biz)

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Dr. Phil Rutherford PhD Thesis

## APPENDIX

### **1. What is a competency?**

Spencer and Spencer 1993

### **2. School Learning.**

B S Bloom 1976

### **3. Lock Step Instruction.**

### **4. Learning Outcomes.**

### **5. Competency Based Learning.**

M Minns adapted from Bloom 1976

# What is a Competency?

*A competency is an underlying characteristic of an individual that is causally related to criterion referenced effective and/or superior performance in a job or situation.*

Underlying Characteristic; means that it is deep and enduring part of a personality

Causally Related; means it causes or predicts behaviors and performance

Criterion-referenced; means that it predicts who does well or poorly against a standard

## There are five types of Competency Characteristics

**Motives**; That drives, directs and selects behavior towards a goal and/or action and away from others

**Traits**; The physical characteristics that are consistent with superior performance.

**Self Concept**; A persons' attitudes, values and /or self image.

**Knowledge**; The information held by a person in specific content areas

**Skills** ; The ability to perform a certain physical or mental task

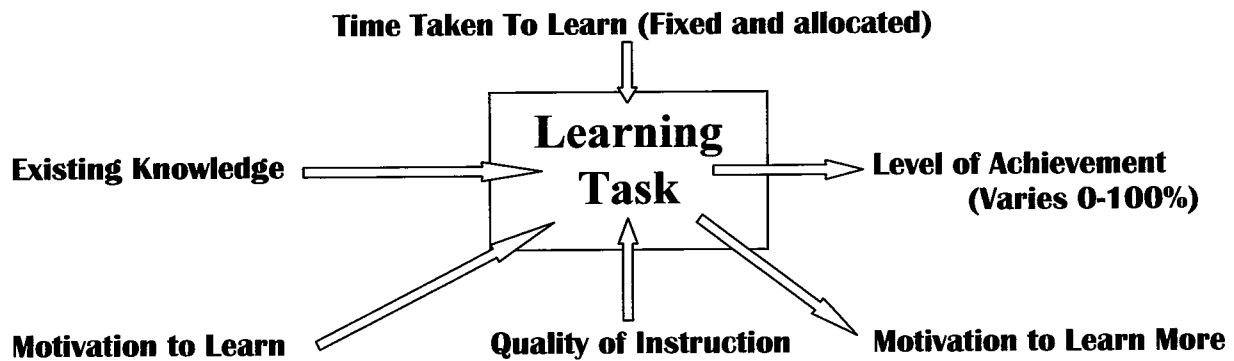
# What is Competency Based Training?

To understand competency based training we must first look at school learning.

Student Characteristics

Task/Instructions

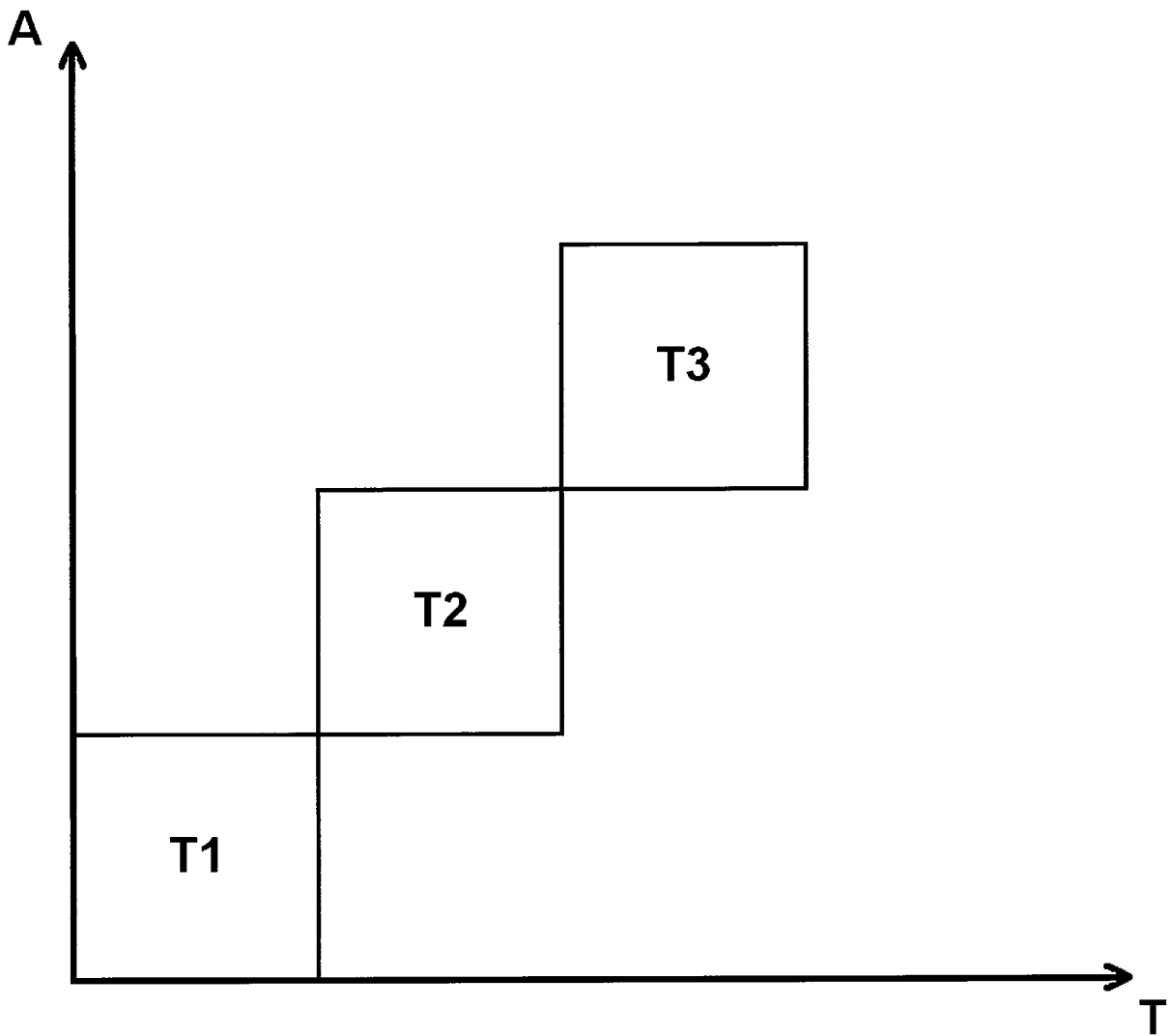
Learning and Outcomes



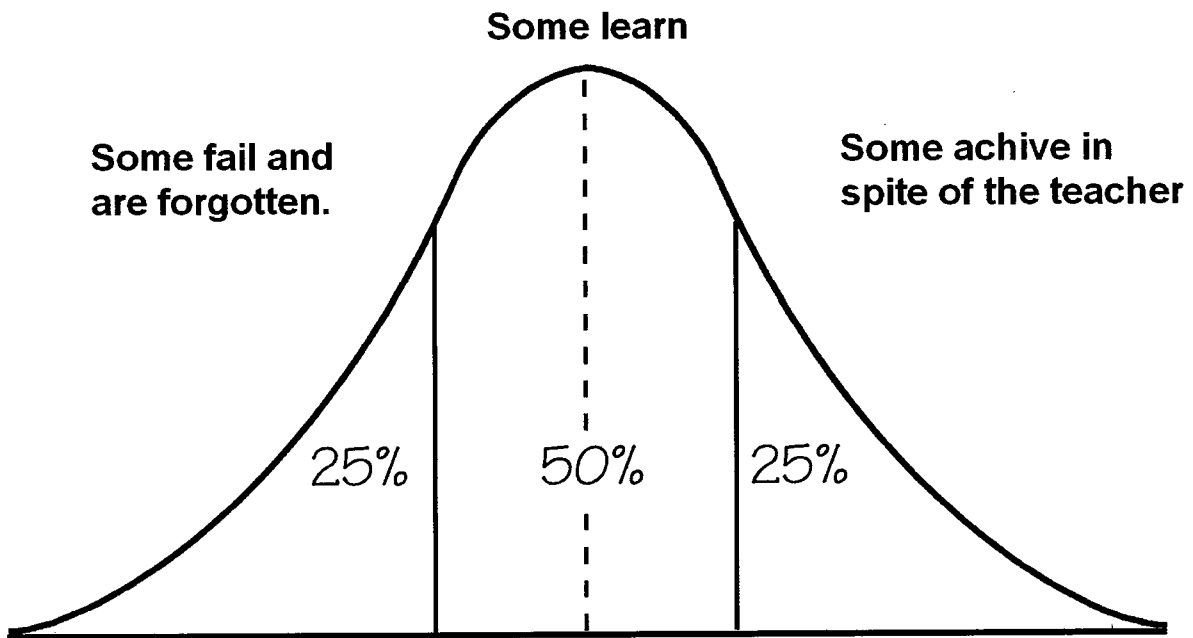
## School learning.

HUMAN CHARACTERISTICS AND SCHOOL LEARNING  
Benjamin S. Bloom 1976

# Lock Step Instruction; Time Based.



# Learning Outcomes



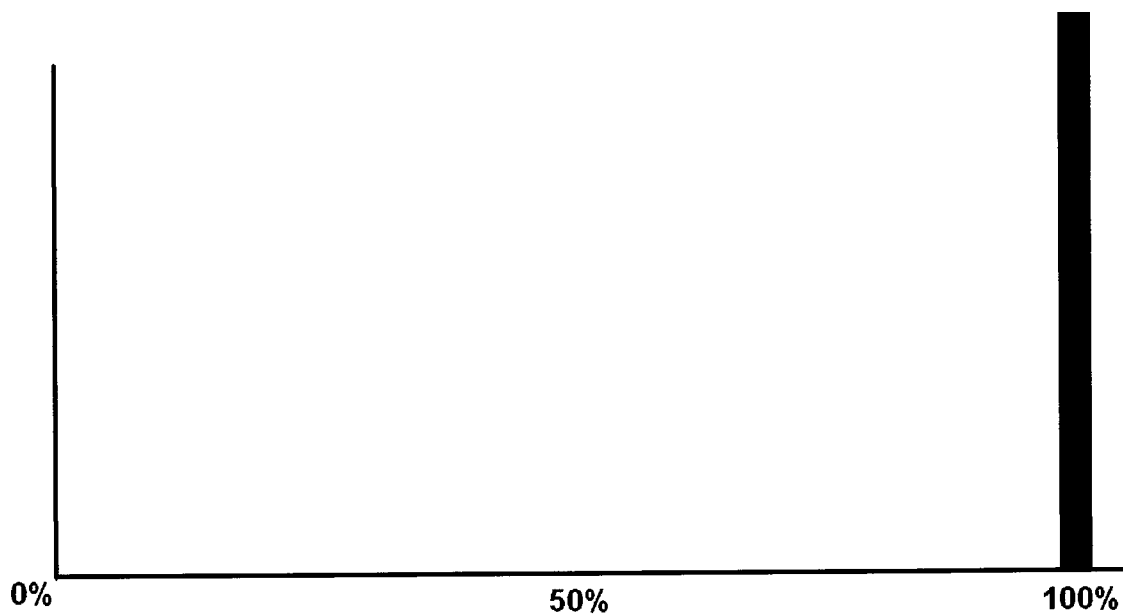
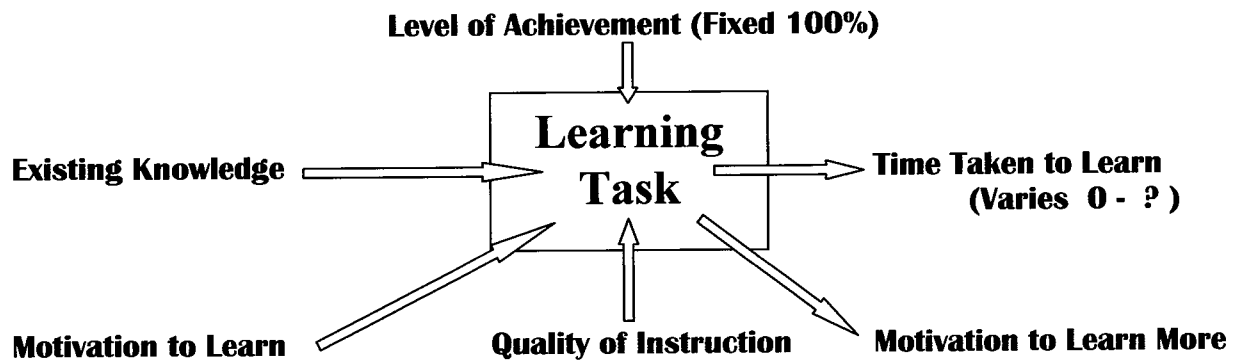


# Competency Based Learning

Student Characteristics

Task/Instructions

Learning and Outcomes



Adapted from B.S.Bloom 1976