



**AN OPEN, INSPIRING AND QUESTIONING VIEW**

**ON**

**QUALITY IN VALIDATION**

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# European Guidelines for Validating Non-formal and Informal Learning





# European Guidelines

- Comprehensive, broad in scope
- Reflect 2004 Principles very well
- Rich input from many, varied sources
  - Peer learning activities
  - European inventories
  - Research literature

# Which View?





# Which View?

- Practitioner?
- Scholar?

# Which View?

- Quality as a practitioner
- Quality as a scholar
- Practitioner and scholar
  - Emerging questions about quality

# Practitioner View





## Practitioner View

- Quality defined by context, by communities of practice (Van Kleeef, 2012)
- Practitioner in HE
- CAEL Standards (Fiddler, Marienau & Whittaker, 2009)
- Compare to European Guidelines?





## CAEL vs European Guidelines

- 10 CAEL Standards
- 6 of 10 CAEL Standards better expressed in European Guidelines
  - Transparency, training, accountability
- Some HE quality issues not in European Guidelines



## CAEL Standards more helpful

- Credit or its equivalent should be awarded only for learning and not for experience.
- Assessment should be treated as an integral part of learning, not separate from it, and should be based on an understanding of learning processes.



## CAEL Standards more helpful

- If awards are for credit, transcript entries should clearly describe what learning is being recognized and should be monitored to avoid giving credit twice for the same learning.
- Fees charged for assessment should be based on the services performed in the process and not determined by the amount of credit awarded.



Open  
Learning

## Quality Improvements?

- Create sector-specific guidelines
  - In HE
  - In other sectors – VET, employment, voluntary, etc.?
- In HE, could draw on:
  - Canadian guidelines (Van Kleef et al, 2009)
  - Guidelines on APL (QAA for HE, 2004)

# Scholar View



## Scholar View

- VNFIL Claim:

Non-formal, informal learning =  
Formal learning

- What evidence?



## Scholar View

- Convergent validity
  - Project CAEL in 1970s
- Predictive validity
  - CAEL 2010 study (Klein-Collins, 2010)
  - Better GPAs, more courses taken, higher degree completion rates, faster degree completion rates

# Equivalency questioned

- Michelson (2006)
- PLA (aka VNFIL) reflects Enlightenment ideas of knowledge
- De-values learning of excluded groups







## Equivalency questioned

- Harris (2006) and Brier (2006)
- South African RPL (aka VNFIL) pilots
  - Adult Education, Law
- Bernstein's model – sociology of knowledge



## Equivalency questioned

- Boundaries between knowledge acquired through formal means and knowledge acquired through other means
- RPL (VNFIL) needs to recognize disciplinary knowledge
- Different disciplines, different boundary strengths

# Equivalency questioned

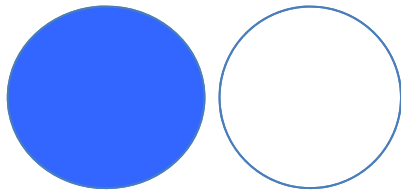
- Nature of informal learning
  - 90% of brain activity (thinking) unconscious
  - Expert knowledge difficult to articulate
- VNIFL focus on clarity, measurement may underrate



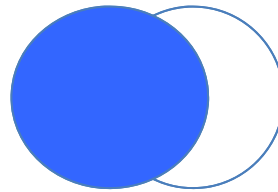


# Equivalency questioned

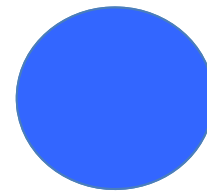
## What is Knowledge?



THIS?

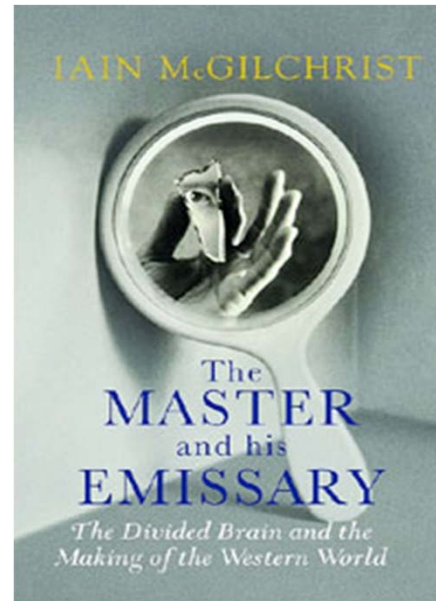


or THIS?



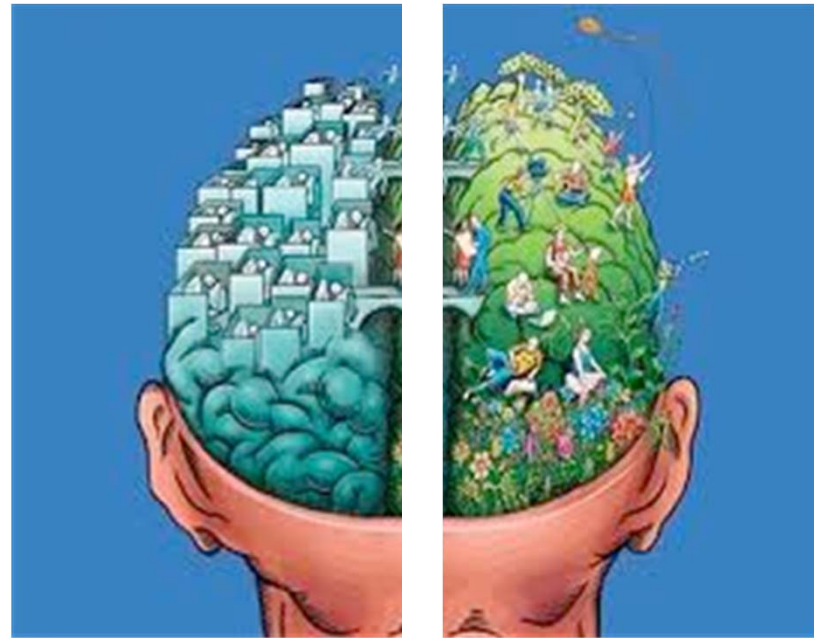
or THIS?

## Evidence from Neuroscience



[http://www.ted.com/talks/ian\\_mcgilchrist\\_the\\_divided\\_brain.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/ian_mcgilchrist_the_divided_brain.html)

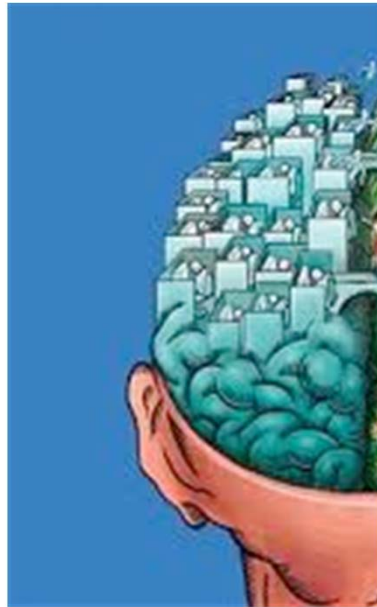
# Divided Brain



How – not What

# Divided Brain

Left Side Knowledge is:

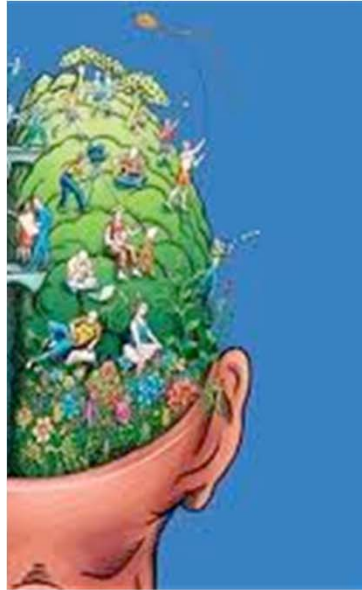


- Decontextualized
- Linear, sequential
- Verbal
- Narrow focus
- Sameness, fixed
- Prosaic
- Utilitarian, selfish
- Mechanical



# Divided Brain

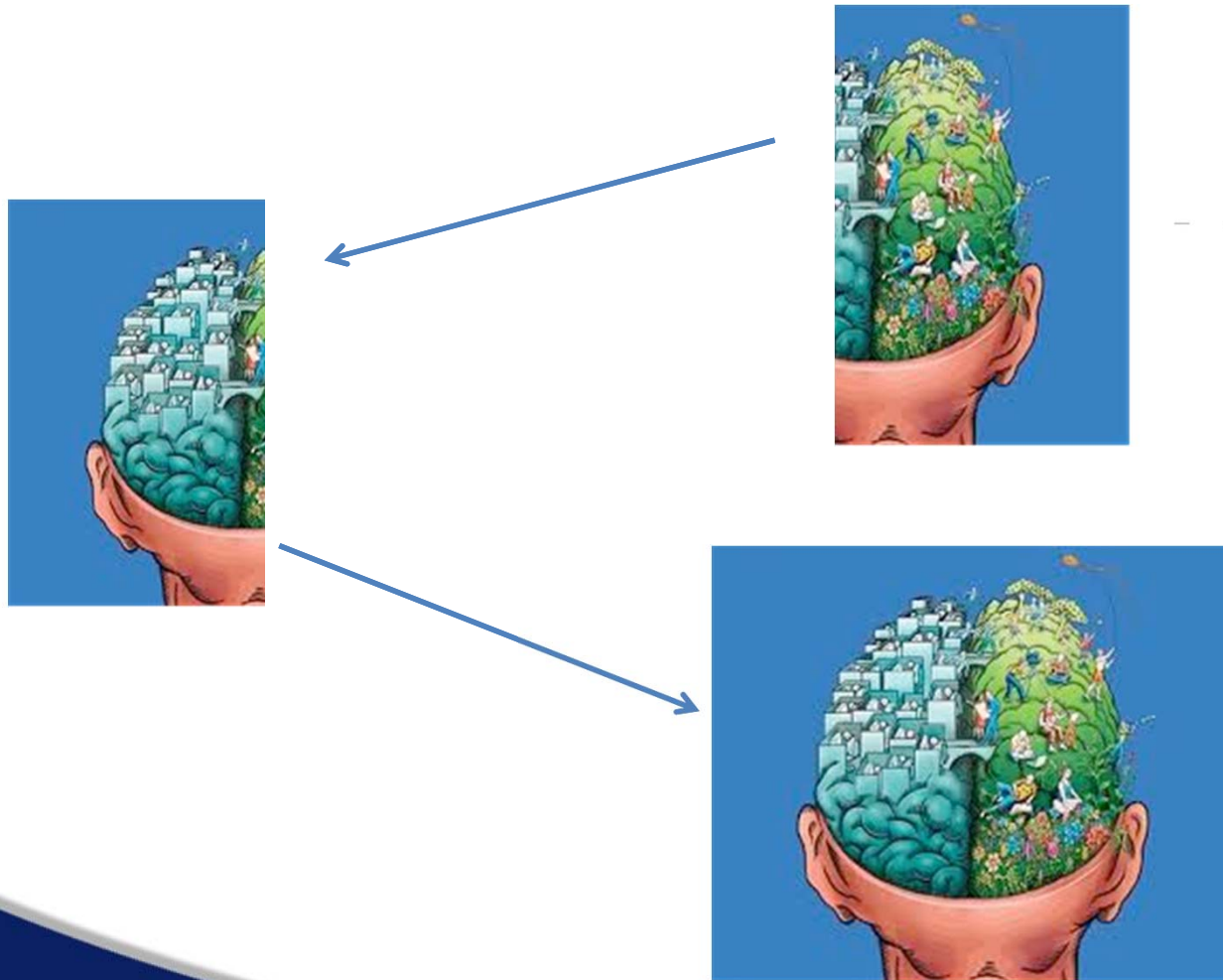
Right side knowledge is:



- Contextualized
- Networked, holistic
- Non-verbal
- Broad attention
- Newness, change
- Metaphoric
- Empathetic
- Embodied

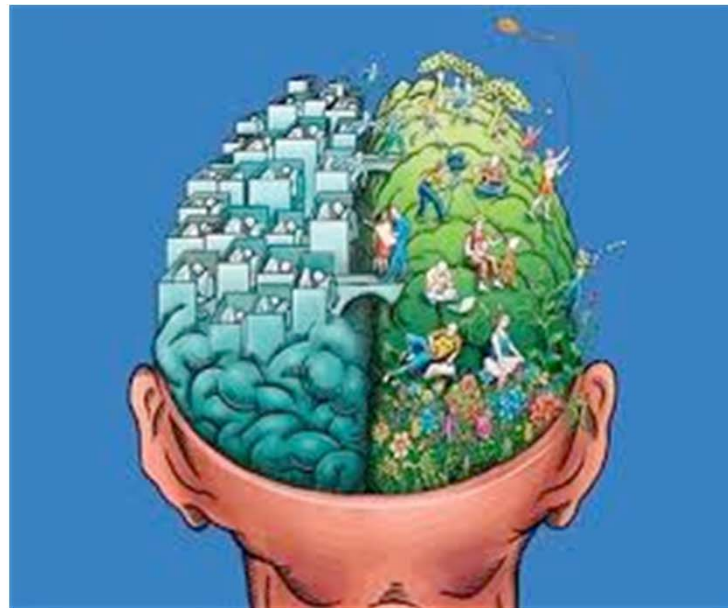


# Whole World View



# Integrated Brain

## Rationality and Creativity





## Left Side Domination

- Left side suppresses right side
- Reduces new input and keeps knowledge de-contextualized
- Rationality rather than reasonableness



## Implications for VNFIL?

- Qualities valued in VNFIL Guidelines:
  - clarity, measurement, repeatability, etc.
- Left brain approach to right brain knowledge
  - Treating as equivalent



## Implications for VNFIL?

- Much informal learning may be right brain knowledge,
  - more contextualized, concerned with detail, more open to change
- Need imaginative assessment methods to express right brain knowledge in left brain terms
- Recognize, celebrate the difference!

# Implications for VNFIL?

- VNFIL as bridge?

Informal  Formal



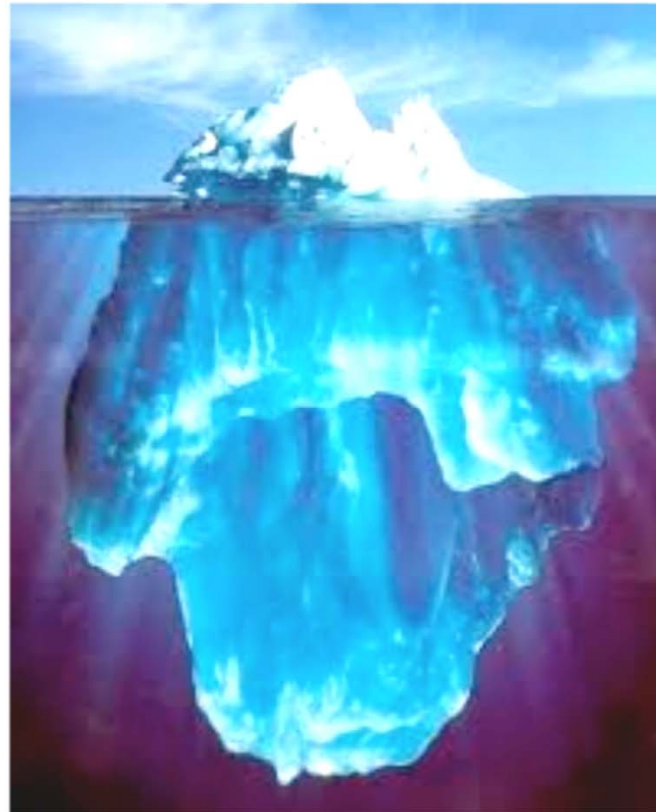


# Practitioner and Researcher



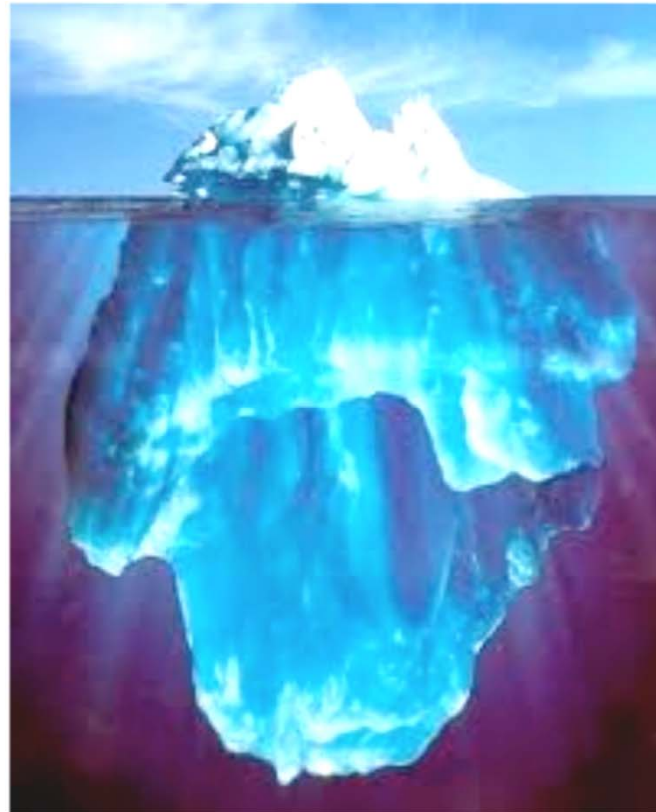
## Emerging Issues

# Iceberg of Informal Learning

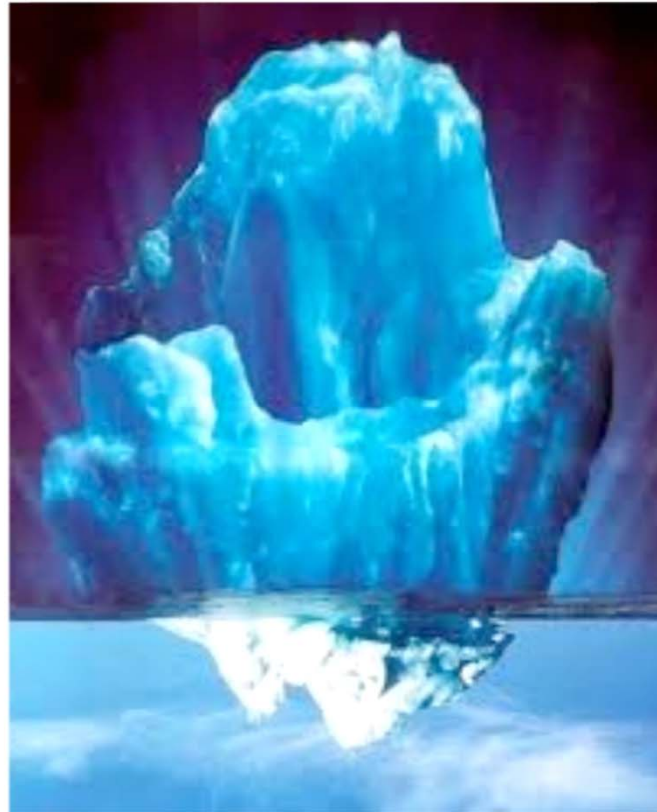




# Iceberg of Informal Learning



# Iceberg flips





# Ubiquitous Learning

(Cross, 2012)

- Web 2.0
- Wikipedia, etc.
- Social networks
- Mobile learning
- Open Educational Resources
- Gaming, Simulation, Virtual Worlds





# Disruptive Innovations

(Christiansen, 2011)

- MOOCs e.g. MIT, Udacity
- Kahn Academy, Saylor Foundation
- OER University, People's University, etc.
- Mozilla Badges



## VNFIL's Response

- Changing formal education beyond recognition
- Field of VNFIL has know-how needed to recognize new learning
- How will we respond to loss of anchor to formal education?

## VNFIL at Tipping Point

- Alarm?
- Popularity?
- Key to success: Beyond quality assurance
- Continuous quality improvement

