

PAPER:

***ISSUES OF RIGOUR IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH:  
A CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH TO THE  
EVALUATION OF COMPETENCY-BASED TRAINING***

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Abstract:

This paper briefly describes the methodology and emergent outcomes of a national, qualitative study of competency-based training, undertaken as a funded, National Centre for Vocational Education Research project in 1998, and adopting a constructivist approach to evaluation.

The study involved conducting approximately two hundred telephone interviews with training managers in enterprises throughout Australia. Eight, intensive case studies of enterprise training, one in each State and Territory, were also undertaken. These case studies involved making detailed observations of the training programs on offer within each enterprise and in-depth interviews with the major stakeholders of training ie. trainees, trainers, supervisors and company and training managers.

Criteria for rigour that were adopted within the study are outlined and problematic issues discussed. It is argued that such studies are a crucial complement to more positivist approaches, in providing a rich picture of vocational education and training in practice and the detailed perspectives of multiple stakeholders. The case is presented that constructivist research can be as rigorous as that conducted within a more traditional framework and that diverse approaches to VET research are essential.