

**SEEDING THE GAP: AN
INVESTIGATION INTO
COMPETENCY-BASED TRAINING
AT THE EDGE OF CHAOS**

PHILLIP D RUTHERFORD

MProfStudies (UNE)

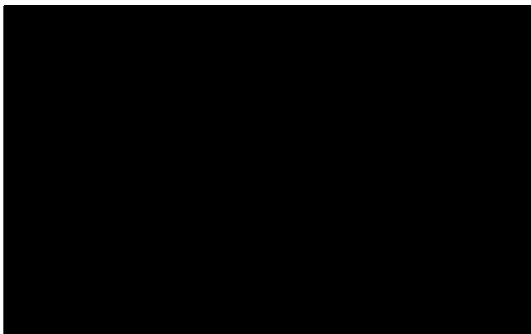
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Certificate of Originality

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that to the best of my knowledge any assistance received in preparing this thesis and all sources used have been acknowledged.



Phillip D Rutherford

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ABSTRACT

This research study investigates the impact that the complexity theories have on the way in which competency-based training is designed and implemented in Australia.

The aim of this study was to define, understand, map and analyse the experiences of individuals who have participated in a competency-based training program for the position that they held at the time of the research. To achieve this, a review was conducted of contemporary theories and research carried out in fields related to vocational education and training, the management of knowledge and learning in the workplace, modern business practices, and of new ways of thinking about complex organisational and human systems.

An ethnographic-inductive case study was conducted with the participation of staff employed in three work environments, each different in its own ways but all characterised as complex and at times chaotic. It was built around a multi-method research approach in which interviews, observation and focus groups were used to gather and validate data concerning the phenomenon of skills and knowledge applied in such environments. Thematic analysis techniques were then used to collate, analyse and make sense of this data.

The outcome of this was a new way of understanding the work environment for which competency-based training systems are designed and a questioning of the current approach to vocational training and the assumptions and definitions upon which it is based. This research study concluded that while the principles and processes of competency-based training are sound, its actual application and the definitions that support it have failed to address the real needs of individuals and teams working in complex work environments.