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# Competency based education training: a world perspective

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Competency based education and training (CBET) is a much worn topic of discussion among academics and practitioners in the vocational education and training sector since the approach to education and training began to dominate the public policy of a number of countries around the world. Indeed, after some nearly 20 years of international experience with varying approaches to CBET, it seems that the debates surrounding its implementation continue and, despite the volume of research and discussion, there still remains considerable debate and confusion as to some basic matters like what constitutes a widely accepted definition of "competency".

Nonetheless, the adoption by countries of CBET systems continues and the evolution of CBET also continues in countries where the system has been in place for some time. For this reason, this book which examines the implementation of CBET in a number of countries and provides some case studies from countries where the adoption of the system is relatively recent, is a welcome addition to the literature on the subject.

A number of the chapters chart the evolution over the last 12 years or so of CBET in Australia which is now quite different from how it was originally introduced. The relatively recent introduction of the "training package" is clearly outlined and some good sections on training packages are contained in the chapters by Misko and Robinson and Gilling and Graham.

Another current and somewhat thorny issue in Australia is the introduction of graded competencies and this is discussed in the chapter by Misko and Robinson.

Of course, the role of assessment gets a particular mention by a number of contributors to the book and the chapter by Phillip Capper distinguishing between "capability", "competence" and "expertise" was particularly refreshing.

Capper makes the point that assessment of an individual's competence in complex organisational settings where an individual's work performance is interdependent with the performance of others makes little sense and that "competence" in an era of teamwork should not be understood as an individual attribute. He also stresses that educational qualification systems are as much about the allocation of power and status as they are about assessing competence and reminds those responsible for workplace assessment of the broader sociological perspective. This chapter is particularly challenging to workplace assessors to come up with some alternative assessment practices to meet the changing educational aims required by modern enterprises and some of the contradictions inherent in workplace assessment.

The case studies in the book provide some insight into the implementation of CBET into different cultural and educational systems to that of Australia and the importance of having the various stakeholders (particularly government, industry bodies, the education profession and enterprises) working together with a unanimity of purpose.

The inclusion of a chapter by Kirsch which purports to examine educational policies in France and written in French seems an interesting twist for a book published for English consumption!

In summary, this book adds to the continuing debates that surround the implementation of CBET. While the authors clearly support the continuation of an integrated approach to CBET, the book concludes that there are still many unresolved issues and much more research needed before CBET can be declared as meeting the expectations of its proponents. The book is an important resource to those seeking to improve approaches to CBET.