Vocational Trainers’
perspectives of their continuing
professional learning

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Statement of Originality

This dissertation contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my dissertation, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.
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Synopsis

Since the Australian government depends on vocational education and training (VET) trainers to deliver competency based training qualifications in an effort to develop and maintain a skilled Australian workforce, the increasing amount of research indicating that VET trainers are under-qualified and/or under-skilled for their training roles and responsibilities is troubling. More troubling however is the lack of information available on the VET workforce, particularly the workforce in the private VET sector. This is a problem because little is known about which skills or capabilities experienced trainers in the private sector perceive they lack, and what types of learning and development activities they believe would strengthen their workplace capabilities.

The purpose of this research is to address this knowledge gap by exploring the perceptions of a sample of eleven trainers employed in the private VET sector. It is anticipated these trainers’ perceptions of the qualifications and skills they need and of their CPD experiences will shed light on the problems they face in acquiring new skills and updating or enhancing those they already have. Furthermore, this study seeks to shed light on how the VET community can support trainers in their efforts to acquire necessary capabilities through appropriate CPD activities.

Because this study concerns phenomena about which little prior information is available, it is based on a constructivist inquiry paradigm, and was conducted using an exploratory qualitative approach, with the aim of arriving at a collective reconstructions of
trainers CPD experiences. Volunteers were selected on a first response basis and participated in semi-structured face to face interviews.

Findings of this study were derived from patterns and relationships in the data collected, which was then considered in view of previous research and existing theory. The findings of the study fall under two main themes: 1) VET trainers’ role, qualifications and skills, and 2) VET trainers’ continuing learning.

This study provides a perspective that is not readily accessible in current literature, and offers theoretical contributions as well as practical implications for improving the CPD experiences of VET trainers in the private sector. It is also anticipated this research study can be replicated in order to further study the phenomenon of VET trainers CPD, or to provide comparative analysis of findings across geographical areas and/or VET sectors.