

COMPLETING YOUR PROJECT

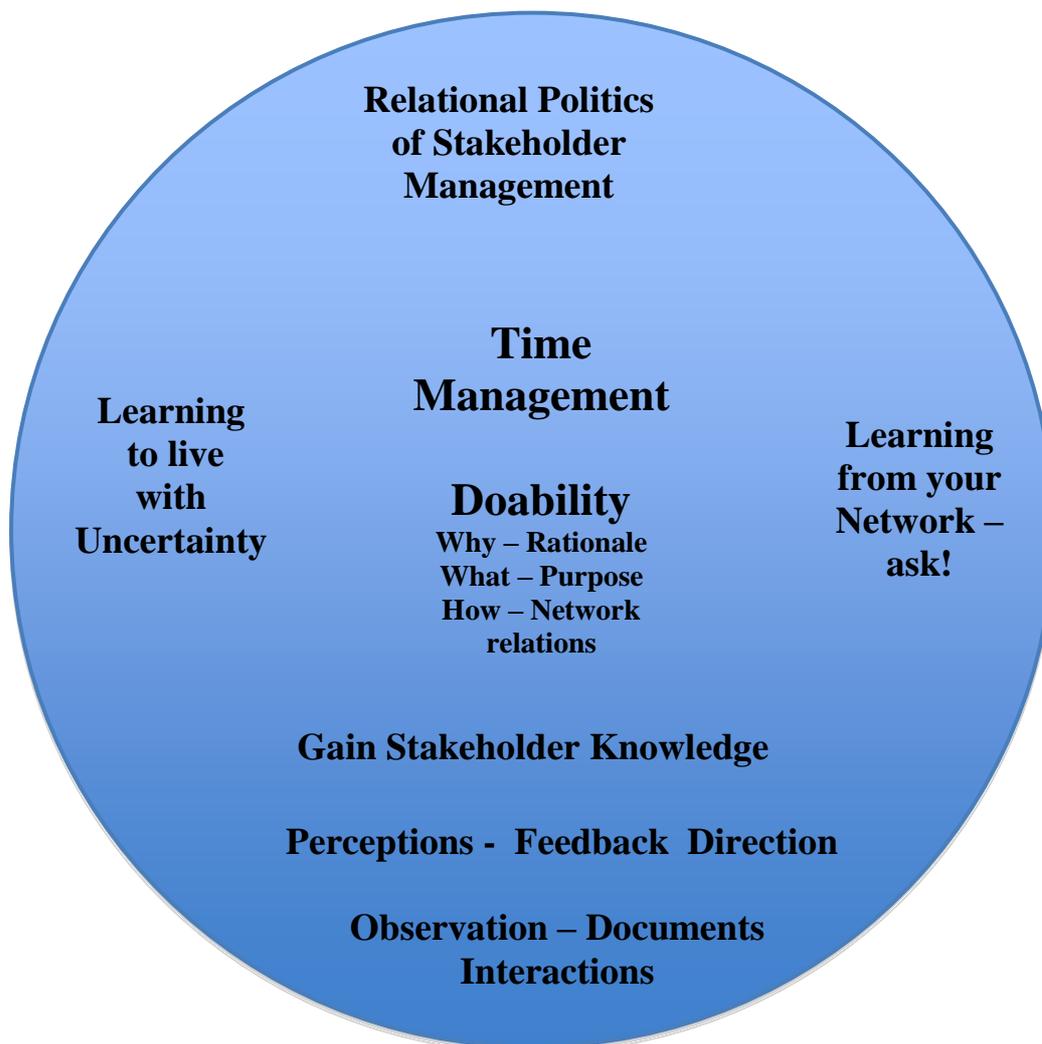
SORTING OUT YOUR DATA

SORTING OUT YOUR HEAD....

Guidelines

For New VET Researchers

Building Personal Researcher Capability



This is advice from **one** researcher.

You will have guidance from mentors, supervisors and NCVET. They should focus your process for you.

This advice is just to get you going and float some useful ideas.

What will suit your project best will be unique to the subject and data that you have.

Try if you can to read what you have and then find a process that will let the voices of your research speak!

Research is about coping with a series of dilemmas:

- Fear of Focus – what problem and what network of people?
- Fear of Literature – there is so much and it is all linked, the words are long and have many meanings! Find a key source and build out from that...like an onion with layers that are interesting but reduce in relevance as each layer is peeled away.
- Fear of Method – how do I do thissteal methods from VOCED and other who went before you – check with mentors.
- Fear of Contacts – how do I get and keep relations in the field? You start with who you know and snowball outwards, and the network grows.
- Fear of Data loss – relying on others for your vital information. Keep the contact going, keep them involved.
- Fear of Finding Nothing – what if it is a waste of time – it never is, just read and the stories begin to emerge. Follow the voices!
- Fear of Writing – how can I be an author! Start by writing the obvious. Every sentence is a step on the way every few paragraphs a page of the complete work. If in doubt –write.
- Fear of Nobody reading! – hold seminars, send out copies, make up briefs and executive summaries, put it on the web, and they will find it!

Balancing work – life – research pressures is the key art of the learning.

- Be prepared to cut deals for access. You want people's time and you may have to pay for it by looking for what you can offer people and their organisations back in return.
- Make sure you have checked with your organisation that they are happy about your instrument and direction.
- While your instruments collect what is said and believed, make sure you take notes about what is not being said or hidden. Observations can be a vital part of research.
- If you are organising focus groups try to make them linked to an event the participants will already be attending.
- Questionnaire return rates of 10% are common unless you can construct a special relationship with the participants.
- If you are finding stimulating people difficult try using pictures or them using a camera so they can bring something to the discussions.
- I find that doing my own transcription is a good way of getting back into the conversation and often I have some good insights while listening to the interview again.
- Let your participants check what you are finding by giving them short drafts of issues to increase validity of your study.
- Publicise what you are doing with short stories in any forum that is looking for copy to distribute within your organisations or related organisations.
- Do not start from scratch when designing instruments. Find something similar and adapt. Keep it short. Do you need all the answers, and if so what for?
- Remember to keep reading while you are collecting – link into the literature as the meaning of your study starts to unfold.
- You can start to plan your final document format while collecting data and begin to fill in the early sections.

Analysing your Data

- Sit back and see what are the main themes emerging from your data.
- What are the three or four most important relationships, tensions, process, outcomes, that you have been dealing with as you were reading?
- What change has the greatest utility – where can the least be done and the greatest change made?
- Start to sketch out responses to your research questions.
- When you start to draw conclusions from your data be careful to make sure that what you assert is in proportion to the data you have gathered, and the locations you have studied. Be more speculative about any other proposals that may need further research and testing in the field.
- So how has your study added to, confirmed, contested or extended the knowledge of others already in the field....this is your contribution academically.
- You will be aiming to draw up **implications** from your data not recommendations.

Before writing up

- Read similar publications
- Think of three typical stakeholders you know – write this for them
- Read all the NCVER templates, guidelines, referencing guides etc.
- Think of the possible people this could be going to. What are the politics of your final document so that people are informed and not threatened.
- Sometimes you may need different reports for different audiences.