Selected software packages provide a powerful toolkit for research into VET

Dr Tom Maxwell, Dr David Laird and Mrs Robyn Smyth
School of Education Studies
University of New England Armidale

VET is a particular research context in which it is essential that the complexities of the workplace are taken into account. We contend that a number of sophisticated software packages are available to facilitate such research. Providing that sound theoretical and methodological frameworks are not neglected, computer-assisted research in the VET sector has the potential to produce results more quickly with greater depth of analysis. Software packages on their own, but especially in combination, provide powerful tools for analysis of quite large multi-method studies. For example, the use of the NUD*IST software package facilitates a more in depth analysis of qualitative data. NUD*IST also has the facility to import base data tables from Excel. Output tables of quantitative data produced by NUD*IST can also be introduced into SPSS for analysis. SPSS can also be teamed with QUEST for Rasch analysis for a comprehensive analysis of quantitative data. Research on Dual Accredited Vocational Courses in New South Wales to illustrate the power of these combinations.

Software packages can also facilitate greater collaboration between researchers. MSProject also provides a tool for developing and sharing tasks and time goals. Merge allows different NUD*IST projects to be merged so that researchers working on the same data set can do so independently but later can occur. MSWord with NUD*IST allows ease of report writing. The use of these packages will be illustrated in a large multi-method, recently completed project in which similar hardware across researchers in a developing country context proved to be extremely beneficial. *Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Search and Theorising

**Topic area:** Research and technology - using technology in research - implications for researchers and the researched.

**Key words:** Research, software, data analysis

**Presenter:**
Dr Tom Maxwell
School of Education Studies
University of New England
Armidale NSW 2350

Ph: 02 6773 2583
Email: tmaxwell@metz.une.edu.au