Qualitative data analysis with NVIVO

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Moor Health and Wellbeing - an evaluation View project

Risks in Research-informed Teaching View project

Qualitative data analysis with NVIVO

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and apply learning. Overall, this book is a very good overview of practice and theory as it relates to children's rights across the age ranges and across disciplines. My one small critique would be that it would have been good to have a chapter on international perspectives and children's rights, as I think this would have added an extra dimension to the book and enabled readers to reflect upon similarities and differences on the ways in which children's rights are applied in practice in the UK as well as in non-UK contexts. Nonetheless, I would recommend the book to practitioners and students as it provides many insights into children rights not only in relation to theory but, importantly, in relation to practice.

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Qualitative data analysis with NVIVO (2nd ed.), by Pat Bazeley and Kristi Jackson, London, Sage, 2013, 328 pp., £27.99 (paperback), ISBN 978–1-4462–5656-5

This book explains the purpose and mechanisms of NVivo qualitative data analysis software to new researchers and learners of the programme, and instructs seasoned users how to utilise the more recently added functions that come with the latest version (v. 10). Although primarily aimed at researchers, the book will be of interest to anyone conducting project work, who will find NVivo a versatile tool that can be adapted to their own specific needs.

The structure of the book is straightforward and the chapter and section headings are self-explanatory, aiding rapid access to desired text. The practical support offered by Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo includes tips, actions, warnings and links. The layout which separates open-text narrative and boxed instructions/ guides is pleasingly clear and helpful. Although those new to NVivo may find it useful to work sequentially through the book, researchers with a modicum of experience of the software will find themselves constantly flitting backwards and forwards within, and between, chapters, in order to locate the specific instruction or strategy they require.

To create room for description of Nvivo's more recent technological advances, less time is afforded to applying the software to specific qualitative methodologies than in the previous edition. It is therefore essential, now, that anyone new to such approaches should first read some more general texts prior to learning how qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) can support the adopted methods. Chapter 1 helpfully provides a list of recommended texts for this purpose. The chapter goes on to provide a brief history of QDAS development, outline some of the historical criticisms of QDAS in research, before moving swiftly on to an introduction to the software. Interestingly, the authors chose to do this via a tour of the environmental change sample project that comes embedded within the package. Readers are therefore introduced to NVivo through familiarisation with the software's potential,

rather than starting off with step-by-step instructions or definitions of common terms. This serves to motivate the reader and encourage him/her to visualise their own project in relation to the software capabilities.

For me, one of the highlights of the book is Chapter 2, which presents an overview that demonstrates the range of possibilities of applying NVivo to various types of project work as one starts to develop one's research ideas and project structure.

Chapters 3–5 authoritatively guide the reader through the key stages of importing and coding data, including suggested methods of establishing coding structures. One essential piece of advice afforded within Chapter 5 is how to avoid creating 'viral coding systems' – seemingly endless project structures and data hierarchies within which codes are frequently replicated, inevitably leading to confusion at the analysis stage – something that is surprisingly easy to create. Chapter 6 describes how to set-up classifications of data units and attach attributes to these units – a particularly useful feature for qualitative research where units (cases) might be individual interviewees, schools, classes, departments, organisations, etc. For this second edition, the additional elements to the original core content show how the software can be used in mixed methods projects (including social media sources) (Chapter 7) and in various approaches for supporting team-based applications.

In Chapter 8, there is a comparatively brief but significant explanation of how to import reference materials from bibliographic databases, such as Endnote and RefWorks, allowing literature reviews to be undertaken within NVivo, utilising the query tools in order to search literature sources in PDF format, and coding this material into research themes. Chapter 9 tackles the more complicated tasks of working with data-sets and mixed methods. My recommendation here is to work through this chapter slowly and methodically, starting off with small, simple data-sets to become familiar with the importing process and auto coding options, before moving on to larger and mixed method data-sets. In this way, mistakes and clunky solutions are more likely to be rectified while there are still manageable volumes of data. Chapters 10 and 11 consider the more advanced tools that NVivo offers for visualising data through models, graphs, reports, and cluster analyses, among others. I find it quite surprising here that more is not made of the framework matrix tool offered by NVivo. Having used this functionality myself, I think it is a missed opportunity for the authors to provide guidance on which contexts this form of analysis might be particularly applicable, such as on modestly scaled student inter-view-based projects. The final chapter dedicates necessary space to clarifying how the software can be used by teams, including how multiple researchers can safely work on projects, and how projects can be developed and shared between, and across, teams.

Being currently involved as an inter-disciplinary researcher in a number of social research projects, I approached this book from a very practical viewpoint. If, as it claims on the back cover, the book is 'straightforward, jargon-free' and 'provides an invaluable introduction to planning and conducting qualitative data analysis with NVivo', then it should be a resource that I could confidently recommend to any early stage researcher. I have been happy to do exactly that with respect to my colleagues, some of whom are just embarking on their first commissioned projects and are on the look-out for helpful research aids.

I was expecting a resource that provided very clear instruction for novice users on how to use this software, and it delivers masterfully on this expectation, primarily because of the logical sequencing and organisation of technical guides and actions. But this book does a lot more beside. It presents a far more developed view of NVivo that goes beyond simple instruction and takes account of changing researcher needs. The authors quickly reveal how this package can be utilised in a far broader whole-project sense. Although coding remains the key function of NVivo, the text reveals how the increasing range of tools that can be applied to various stages of a project means that this package could very reasonably be considered as *the* vehicle for planning, storing, managing, collating, analysing, visualising and presenting data. From conducting literature reviews and importing survey data-sets, to capturing web page content and exporting reports, this book demonstrates how an organised researcher could maximise NVivo to cater for most of his/her data needs. Its comprehensive view convinced me that I should be able to employ the book as a useful aid for setting up a data management and analysis framework for a complex multi-datasource project that I was contributing toward at the time of reading. Bazeley and Jackson's delivery style proved highly effective at helping me to locate the relevant actions and tips, and to avoid some common pitfalls of working with complex data.

Overall, this book is an exceptionally useful and practical guide on 'how to' use the QDAS, QSR NVivo. It covers the new features of using the software for mixed methods research and importing multi-media files, as well as the staple functions of organising, coding, querying and modelling. There are still occasions when QSR International's online forum remains the number one choice for resolving the more complex technical dilemmas that one can encounter when attempting to precisely match NVivo to one's own specific project needs and structure, principally because the book cannot reasonably be expected to address the numerous possible applications of the software to an infinite range of project set-ups and desired outputs. Nevertheless, I can see this book being used as a bible by qualitative researchers keen on maximising the benefits that NVivo can offer. It is also likely to act as a frequent refresher resource for more experienced NVivo users, myself most definitely included.

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