

Policy Studies Institute Adopts NVivo 7

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At any one time, Britain's Policy Studies Institute (PSI) will be working on around ten qualitative research projects. Some studies will span one year, others three. As PSI recently told the Association for Survey Computing (ASC) conference, almost all are now completed using NVivo 7.

PSI is one of the UK's leading independent research institutes, conducting research to promote economic well-being and improve quality of life. The institute enjoys a reputation for rigorous and impartial evaluation of policy in the UK and Europe.

PSI Principal Research Fellow and Head of Qualitative Research, Dr. Helen Barnes, said the institute was an early adopter of qualitative data analysis software, previously using QSR International's N6 (NUD*IST 6) and NVivo 2 software. PSI recently switched to NVivo 7. At the time, PSI was examining the factors that affect the work, savings and retirement decisions of ethnic minority groups. Dr. Barnes transferred the project from NVivo 2 to NVivo 7 part way through the study.

"We have been using NVivo 2 and N6 successfully for many years, but found parts of the programs unwieldy and inflexible," she said.

"NVivo 7 is a good compromise between the two and functions like 'merge' have improved dramatically, facilitating teamwork. The new Microsoft interface is also much more intuitive."

Dr. Barnes' project involved 60 semi-structured interviews with Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, African, Caribbean and Indian ethnic groups. The transcribed interviews, along with contextual field notes, were analyzed in NVivo 7.

"A particular advantage of the software is the facility it provides for integrating interview material with other data," she said.

"NVivo 7 offers flexible interrogation and analysis without losing sight of the individual. You can compare and contrast perceptions, accounts or experiences; search for patterns or connections; and seek explanations internally within the data set."

"With our project, it would be easy to adopt ethnicity as the most important parameter for the analysis. But as we queried and re-queried the data, it became apparent that cross-cutting themes like low income, family structure and employment history were more meaningful. NVivo helped us to demonstrate this more systematically than would have been possible with traditional methods."

Dr. Barnes said that while her first impressions of NVivo 7 were very good, she believed there was more to come. "I think we haven't exploited all of the opportunities it provides us yet."

More About the Policy Studies Institute

PSI's researchers are organised in three multi-disciplinary research groups: the Employment Group, the Environment Group and the Social Policy Group. Their research strength lies in their use of the most advanced methods and professional expertise, combined with a commitment to analysis and presentation that are of value to all of those interested in evaluating and changing public policies. They have a particularly strong reputation for using large-scale national surveys in an innovative and creative way, but they also make extensive use of other research methods, including case studies, intensive interviewing of special groups, statistical analysis, literature and document research, focus groups and discussions with practitioners and other researchers, seminars, conferences and group discussions. Information: www.psi.org.uk

About NVivo 7

NVivo 7 is designed to handle very rich text based information, where deep levels of analysis on both small and large volumes of data are required. It removes many of the manual tasks associated with analysis, like classifying, sorting and arranging information, so more time can be dedicated to explore trends, build and test theories and ultimately arrive at answers to questions. From policy formulation and education evaluation to mixed methods studies - NVivo 7 supports a wide range of research areas and is used by researchers, forensic scientists, psychologists, tourism managers, sociologists, consultants and academics worldwide.

About QSR International:

QSR International is based in Melbourne, Australia, with offices in North America and Europe. Its flagship products “XSight and NVivo 7” are both designed to help researchers and other people working with non-numerical data to compile, compare and make sense of their information quickly and easily. More than 350,000 users in 90 countries, from market research agencies, government bodies and universities, to tourism, urban affairs and human resources professionals, use QSR research software. QSR International is a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner and the company’s NVivo 7 software was used as a reference project at the Microsoft TechEd 2006 conference in the United States. Information: www.qsrinternational.com