



# Reflecting on the impact of qualitative software on teaching

Dr Clare Tagg

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- Context
- Comparison of NVivo7 & N6
- Design of two day workshops
- Reflections

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# Context

- Compares two similar courses to investigate how the software impacts on teaching and how this in turn impacts on the students' use of qualitative software
- Course is a two day practical workshop organised as part of the Professional Researcher Programme at Leicester University
- Tagg Oram has been running this workshop for 5 years first using N6 and for the last 2 years, NVivo7
- Workshops were redesigned when NVivo7 was introduced and have evolved since
- The same datasets have been used as a basis for the workshops



# Context: Workshop

- Workshop is run as 2 separate days about 3 weeks apart: introductory and intermediate
- Each workshop has about 10 participants - some people attend both days
- Participants are generally full time PhD students, faculty or research staff
- Some participants have their own data and they are encouraged to bring this to the workshop (particularly the 2nd day)
- Two sets of data are provided for those without data:
  - Eating habits is an exploratory research project using diaries collected from the web
  - Bishopston Trading analyses open-ended questionnaires about customer attitudes to a chain of fair trade shops

# **Context:** Challenges for students learning qualitative software

- IT skills
- Experience of qualitative research
- Discipline
- Previous knowledge of qualitative software
- Current state of their research
- English language

# Context: Workshops address these challenges

- Being structured around demonstration followed by open-ended exercises
  - allows students to progress at own pace
  - allows students to use their own data
- Data provided is used to address a research question
  - allows students to see the use of the software in the context of 'doing' research

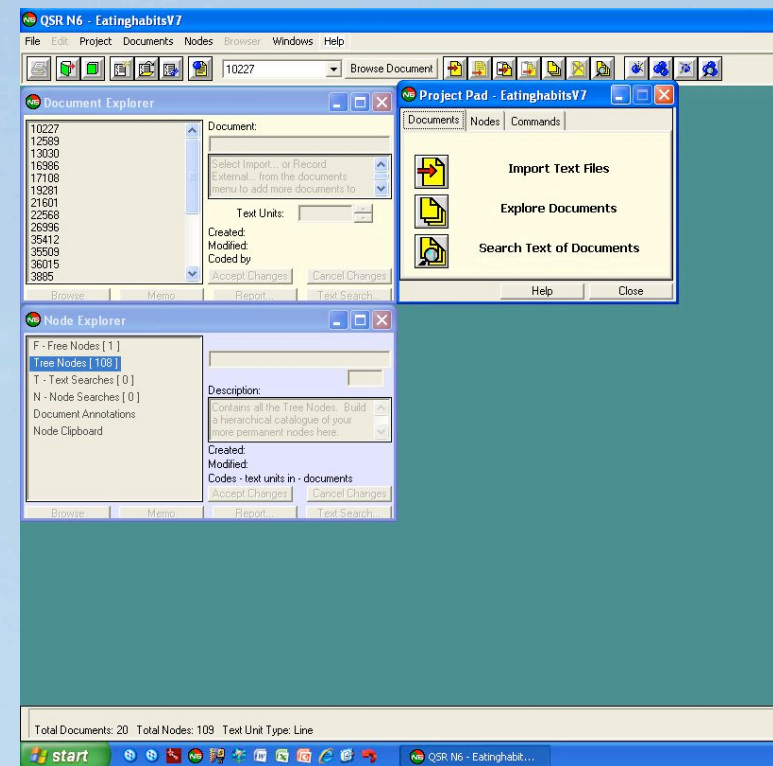
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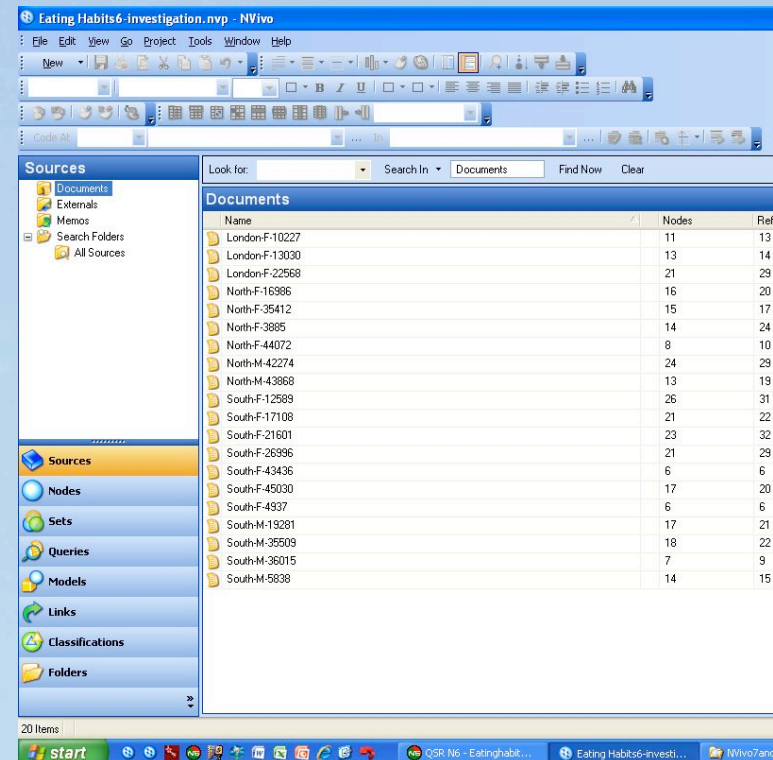
# Comparison: N6 user interface & structure

- User interface
  - bespoke
  - menus, buttons, right click and shortcuts
  - copy & paste
  - project pad
  - structure revealed on load
- Structure
  - documents
  - nodes
  - commands



# Comparison: NVivo7 user interface & structure

- User interface
  - standard
  - menus, buttons, right click and shortcuts
  - copy, paste, undo, drag & drop
  - navigation view
- Structure
  - sources
  - nodes
  - sets
  - cases & attributes
  - relationships
  - models
  - links
  - queries



# Comparison: N6 & NVivo7 tools

- In addition to greater structural elements, NVivo7 also has a much more extensive tool set than N6:
  - Richer documents with annotations & memos
  - Folders
  - More ways of highlighting coding including coding stripes
  - Find options
  - Linking
  - More flexible searching

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# Design of workshop: introductory sessions

| N6 workshop  | NVivo7 workshop   |
|--|---|
| Overview of N6   | Overview of NVivo7  |
| Preparing documents for N6, Creating the N6 project, Importing documents | Creating a project and housekeeping, Getting data into NVivo7 |
|  | Memos & annotation  |
| Open coding  | Open coding   |
| Lunch  | Lunch   |
| Developing & entering a coding tree                                      | Developing and entering a coding tree                         |
| Coding   | Coding  |
| Housekeeping   | Modelling   |
| Surgery session  | Introduction to querying                                      |

# Design of workshop: intermediate sessions

| N6 workshop   | NVivo7 workshop                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Review  | Review of introductory techniques |
| Text searching (both for autocoding & searching for concepts)           | Autocoding & Coding On            |
|   | Cases & Attributes                |
| Lunch   | Lunch                             |
| Automating tedious tasks (command files & import of descriptive coding) | Querying nodes                    |
| Coding tables & node searching  | Querying text                     |
| Exporting quantitative results  | Searching & sets                  |
| Merging if required   | Merging if required               |

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# Reflections: Workshop design

- Despite the significant differences between N6 & NVivo7 workshops have evolved to be remarkably similar
- Workshop design does not need to be dictated by software
- NVivo7 workshops contain more concepts but most students seem to cope
  - Due to familiarity of user interface?



# Reflections: Impact on participants

- Capability to cope with IT is still a significant factor
  - With N6 it was about being able to manipulate files
  - With NVivo7 it is about recognising the interface
- Number of new ideas is an issue for some students
- Some students struggle with qualitative concepts in practice
- Most students do seem able to imagine how they might use the software in their own research
  - Those that bring their own data are using the software

# Reflections: Impact on software use

- Many (most?) students react to the choice of tools by using a very small proportion of topics covered
  - Generally coding and very little else
- With workshops for specific research projects, workshop is tailored to include most useful options
- Number of tools in qualitative software and ways of using them is growing, do students need help with choosing the right tools?



Any comments or  
questions?

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