The Framework approach to qualitative data analysis

Outline

- What is Framework
- Principles of qualitative data analysis
- Using Framework for data management
- Using Framework for interpretation
- Framework in Nvivo
What is Framework?

Developed by Jane Ritchie and Liz Spencer in the 1980s

Key characteristics

- Case and theme based approach
- Matrix display
- Reduces data through summarisation and synthesis
- Retains links to original data
- Output allows comprehensive and transparent data analysis

NatCen Social Research

- Specialises in social policy research
- Policy and practice orientated clients
- Time and resource constraints
- Our approach:
  - Pragmatic toolkit approach
  - Interested in 'real world'
  - Believe that qualitative research is generalisable
Principles of qualitative data analysis

Aim of analysis - analytical outputs

Categories of things (thematic analysis)
- Reasons for gambling
- Sources of debt advice
- Attitudes to the environment

Categories of people or processes (typologies)
- Types of gambler
- Types of school programme
- Grant application processes

Why people do or think what they do (explanatory analysis)
- Factors influencing how people feel about income in retirement
- What helps achieve positive outcomes from an employment programme
Introduction to Framework in NVivo

**The black box…**

Principles of QDA long neglected

- Historic focus on findings being 'intuitive'
- No widely accepted 'good practice'
- Focus on tools not methods
- Focus on 'coding' rather than 'interpretation'

**Data management, interpretation**

Two approaches to analysis of qualitative data

- data management and interpretation concurrent
- data management and interpretation sequential

Framework follows second approach

- Aim is to order data to facilitate interpretation
- Interpretation involves thematic analysis, typologies and explanatory analysis
Data management

Objectives of data management

Primary objective
- Re-order ‘fractured discourse’
- Make data accessible

Secondary objective
- Reduce data volume
- Prioritise questions
Data management

Data management involves ‘cutting’ up data

Aim is to create useful ‘piles’ of data about the same thing

Three ways you can ‘cut’ data

- Thematically (‘cut and paste’)
- By case
- By case and theme

Theme-based approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>History of unemployment</th>
<th>Contact with JCP</th>
<th>Impact of help offered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>Ellen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>John</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>John</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case-based approach

John
Ellen
Paul

Employment history
Contact with JCP
Impact of help

Framework - case and theme based

Chart 1: Experiences of employment
Chart 2: Making contact with JCP
Chart 3: Experiences of JCP help and support
Chart 4: Impact of engagement with JCP

How do you choose your themes?

What goes in the cells?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart 1: Experiences of employment</th>
<th>1.1 Experience of unemployment</th>
<th>1.2 History of employment</th>
<th>1.3 Impact on day to day life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Advantages of the framework approach

- Data organised, but reduced
- Retain link to the data
- Look down (thematic analysis)
- Look across (case analysis)
- Combine both (for example, explanations…)

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Using Framework for thematic and explanatory analysis
General principles for thematic analysis

Process
- start close to data and become more abstract
- retain case identifiers and links to raw data
- iterative process

Quality
- categories must be valid
- comprehensive

Output
- self standing
- beginning of further investigation

Thematic analysis

Classification

Categorisation

Detection

Charted data
General principles for explanatory analysis

Process
- Use existing knowledge or ‘hunch’
- Link together different pieces of thematic analysis
- Identify patterns and evidence of these links

Quality
- Must be comprehensive
- Incorporate for multiplicity

Output
- Not a single, definitive explanation, but a framework or model
- Accounts for all cases in the sample

Explanatory analysis

Motivation 1 → Impact 1
Motivation 2 → Impact 2
Wider context
Value of Framework matrix output

- Data already ordered in descriptive ‘chunks’ (columns) which aids question-focussed analysis
- Matrix keeps the context of the data and aids the search for explanation (looking across rows)
- Analytical process is
  - Systematic
  - Comprehensive
  - Transparent
- Encourages display of diversity and avoidance of bias
- Great for teamwork

Limitations of Framework approach

- Time and labour intensive
- Danger of becoming process rather than outcome focused
- Need to be reflexive and critical – not forcing square pegs into round hole
For more information on Framework see:

For information on our training and learning events, please see our website: [http://www.natcen.ac.uk/events-and-training/our-training](http://www.natcen.ac.uk/events-and-training/our-training)

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