Reviewer's report

Title: A multidisciplinary systematic review of the use of diagrams as means of collecting data: techniques, benefits and recommendations

Version: 1 Date: 26 October 2010

Reviewer: Daniel West

Reviewer's report:

Overall this is a good paper, interesting and potentially useful resource to those interested in using this type of methodology in their work. The paper is well written and easy to understand. The research question is reasonably well defined. Having said this, there are number of revisions and changes that could be made to make the paper much more useful.

1. The discussion/conclusion section of the abstract would be much more useful if the major recommendations were listed, rather that such a broad statement about what will be discussed in the paper.

2. The introduction is too long. Paragraphs 1-3 should be combined, shortened into a single paragraph.

3. I liked table 1 and figure 1 in the results section. It would be a better paper is there could be a bit more detail about the major approaches and especially scoring/summary data approaches.

4. In my view, the discussion section could use the most revision. The first paragraph should present a summary of the major findings in the paper and authors' preferred interpretations. Comparisons with other published data should follow. The paragraph describing weaknesses occurs too early in the manuscript and should be moved closer to the end of the discussion.

5. I did not understand the authors’ point about future research focusing on the underpinning theory behind this methodology. This should be better explained in the discussion section.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

none