Reviewer's report

Title: A Very Long Journey: Stories and Metaphors in the Sensemaking of Multiple Primary Health Care Organizational Identities

Version: 2 Date: 10 January 2014

Reviewer: Siw Carlfjord

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General comments
The article addresses an interesting question regarding organizational change, and how managers and staff construct their changing identities. The result is presented as a metaphor, which is very illustrative. I do, however, have some concerns regarding how the study and its results are presented in the paper.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Background
1. As I understand the instructions for authors the Conceptual framework should be part of the Background section, not a separate section in the paper.

Methods
2. Change the heading from “Methodology” to “Methods”
3. At page 6 first paragraph: “By the fall of 2008, the group was also a Network Clinic...”. Does this mean that it has become a “Network Clinic” during the study period? Was this a kind of development, or a political decision? Please provide some more information to make this change clear to the reader.
4. Page 6 second paragraph: How were the informants for the interviews recruited? Please add more information about this.
5. Page 6 third paragraph: How were the patients recruited? How were the informal interviews conducted? I suggest that you either give more information about the patient interviews (method and results), or exclude them from the study. In my opinion these interviews add very little to your results.
6. Page 7. Please provide some more information about the analysis process. Was it primarily an inductive process, or did you develop the metaphors and deductively search for statements to support the pattern? As a methodological reference I would suggest that you use the more recent article about phenomenological hermeneutics by Lindseth and Norberg: A phenomenological hermeneutical method for researching lived experience, Scand J Caring Sci; 2004; 18; 145–153.

Results and Discussion
7. A general comment regarding the results is that you mix your results with interpretations and discussion. I think this could be appropriate with regard to the design of your study, and suggest that you choose the heading “Results and
Discussion”, and then finally provide your “Conclusions” in a separate section.

8. Another general comment about your results is that you state for example “The real success of the project … was the productive cooperation…” (p 11, second paragraph). Is this the opinion of one of the informants, a general perception among the informants or is it your interpretation based on phenomenological hermeneutics? I am not saying that it is wrong, only that you must describe it in a more transparent way to make it understandable and reliable to the reader.

Another example of this is on page 8, second paragraph, where you also refer to Table 2. You state that “they (the physicians) remained suspicious”. This is not a fact, but what the regional manager said in the interview. Or is it an interpretation you do from a number of sources? Be careful in presenting such interpretations or perceptions as facts.

9. Regarding your quotations I find it confusing that you have put some longer quotations in boxes, calling them Tables. I think it would be easier for the reader if you shortened the quotations and presented them as quotations in text. I also wonder why some of the quotations are reported in indented text and others not? Please present the quotations in a consistent manner.

10. You present your results as one Core Metaphor, and a number of, could I call them “Sub-metaphors”. However, you do not present these sub-metaphors consistently. On page 7, under “The core metaphor” you present five such sub-metaphors; departure, destination, jump ship or stay on board, itinerary and pioneers. In your Results section you have three main parts; “Where to? Uneasy departure…”, “Redrawing the itinerary: Negotiations”, and “Being Pioneers of change…”. Finally, your Tables 2-4 show three different Sub-metaphors or sub-themes; “Uneasy Departure and uncertainty…”, “Jumping ship or staying on board…”, and “Redrawing the itinerary”. Please, be more consistent in your presentation.

11. At page 13, first paragraph, you mention the importance of “a visionary and highly legitimated group leader”. I cannot find any information supporting this statement in your results.

12. Do you see any limitations with your study that might be important to consider when interpreting the results?

Conclusions

13. In your conclusion in abstract you highlight “collective leadership”, which is also one of your key words. How was this collective leadership organized? I see nothing about collective leadership in the Methods section. You do describe collective leadership in your discussion, referring to Denis et al, but was this the way it worked in your study? If not, why is this mentioned in conclusions?

14. What are the implications of your findings? I would like to see this in your conclusions, in the manuscript as well as in your abstract. I find the conclusion in abstract to be more of additional Results than Conclusions from your study.

Minor essential revisions:

References
Reference number 7 lacks year of publication.

Discretionary revisions:
List of abbreviations
I see no need for the abbreviation list, as it contains only one abbreviation, already well defined in text.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests