Reviewer’s report

Title: E-assessment of prior learning: A model for interactive systematic assessment of staff with no formal education who are working in Swedish elderly care

Version: 2
Date: 20 November 2013
Reviewer: Christine Hartmann

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Major Compulsory Revisions

1) Page 7, it states, “The assessments of staff members’ knowledge, skills and abilities were based on the curriculum of the upper secondary school care program and contained eight learning objectives.” It would be valuable to learn how these assessments were developed. “Upper secondary school care program” is not something that seems immediately applicable to care for the elderly (assuming it refers instead to care provided in schools). So how, exactly, was the assessment developed? Using what methods? What was the reliability of the assessment? Was validity assessed? Who did the rating? How were raters trained? How were the actors trained? Etc.

2) The assessments performed are referred to as "strict assessments" in the text, but many of the assessment items in the tables could be interpreted in multiple ways, and it's not clear how they would be operationalized and rated. As just one example, what constituted "create a meaningful activity with her”? And what if someone did something that matched that but did not ensure basic health care? How was that scored? A scoring matrix with operationalized examples would be helpful.

3) In numerous places there is mention made of comments participants made. How was participant feedback collected? Were interviews conducted? Was there any qualitative data collection component?

4) I am not convinced that the very basic correlation analyses add anything to this paper. An analysis of who did not participate may give more meaningful information.

Minor Essential Revisions

5) There is a mention of "national occupational standards" later on in the grant. Some mention of what these are and how they are assessed at present would be helpful in the background.

6) What does “formal competence” mean in light of the various definitions stated in the introduction?

7) Second full paragraph on p. 3: The “education and training system” of what?
Does this refer to existing systems of education for Swedish elderly care staff?

8) This sentence’s meaning is unclear as written: “Therefore it is a need to create and test several pathways into professional care there continuous training and career paths need to be developed and improved.”

9) In the results, on p. 6, the description of the grades given in the model is not clear until one looks at the table to find the 3 grades that were given. This should be clear both in the text and the table.

10) It is not clear exactly how long the assessment took. The text states 8 hours, but there was also a 2-hour orientation? Is this included in the 8 hours? And what about individuals who were given twice as much time—for these 10 it took 16, so about 2 working days? Was that a hardship?

11) There is mention made on p. 8 of a “course.” What course? This was an assessment, not a course, correct? This language is confusing.

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

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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.