Reviewer’s report

Title: Transferability of intervention in health education: a systematic review

Version: 1 Date: 17 April 2012

Reviewer: Lynne Parkinson

Reviewer’s report:

• Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)
  1. The numbering of subheadings is unusual, and distracts from the flow of the manuscript.

• Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
  2. The authors need to reference their definition of “transferability”.
  3. This review involved only a narrow search of two databases. The authors do not justify their restricted choice of databases.
  4. More detail about inclusion and exclusion of articles should be provided, and a figure which specifically details this.
  5. The data are somewhat difficult to understand as presented. I would like to see a table that summarises the outcomes for each research question rather than a very long winded textual explanation. The writing in the results section is very dense.
  6. Table 1 is odd and a little confusing. It needs to be formatted for quick understanding.
  7. Page 4: Use of language such as “Two of us (LC, FA) analysed the articles” is unacceptable in a scientific manuscript.
  8. Page 5: The phrase “Addressed the transferability of knowledge, skills, and practices than outcomes transferability” does not make any sense. Perhaps there is a missing word?
  9. Page 7: The sentence “This dose response may depend on the caracteristics (sic) of population and/or presenceof factors in the environment, ces elements influençant le résultat independemment des modalités d’intervention..” lapses into French.
  10. Page 8: In the case of “Category 3: what determines the actual need of the beneficiary in terms of the intervention.” the authors need to use complete sentences.

• Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
  11. The importance of the study is not argued well, and there is insufficient
consideration of previous work to support its importance.

12. The overall research question is not clearly defined in the introduction to the manuscript. The specific research questions are inappropriately placed within the methods section of the manuscript. The research questions should be posed in the background, after their relevance has been justified by a consideration of past work in the field.

13. Please clarify: “Available in their full version”. Does this mean that only those with full text version were included (which would be inappropriate methodology, as all available relevant articles should have been retrieved, not just the easily available articles). Or does it mean that, say abstracts were not included?

14. I draw the authors’ attention to the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines for reporting systematic reviews (See www.prisma-statement.org). There are several important pieces of information missing from this manuscript, for example, a description of the characteristics of the retained studies (eg country of study, main focus, main outcome/finding, etc); and a description of the quality review undertaken of retained studies (if any was undertaken).

15. This review appears to be more narrative than systematic in nature. A systematic review should include: a defined review protocol that clearly sets out the research question/s and proposed methods; a defined search strategy to identify as much relevant literature as possible; specific detail of the search strategy to allow assessment of its rigour and completeness; explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria for primary studies; and, details of information extracted from each primary study including quality criteria to evaluate primary studies. The quality of evidence from a systematic review depends upon the methodological quality of the studies captured.

16. The results do not differentiate between research based articles and review articles, leading to a confused presentation of the data.

17. A comprehensive English grammar and idiom check is needed. It is sometimes quite difficult to make sense of sentences missing vital language forms (eg verbs).

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

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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