Reviewer’s report

Title: Stakeholders’ perceptions of transferability criteria for health promotion interventions: a case study.

Version: 4 Date: 30 January 2014

Reviewer: Darshini Ayton

Reviewer’s report:

Minor Essential Revisions

1. The transferability of health promotion interventions is an issue that is well discussed in the health promotion and public health literature. The authors need to engage with this further with this literature as some of the sources referenced are out dated. A more recent review of the literature would strengthen this section and perhaps a section on systems thinking in relation to complex interventions.

2. The aim of this research is complex and comprises of a number of different aspects. It would be better to articulate the aim as a shorter statement with supporting research questions. It was difficult to understand the components of the ASTAIRE tool. It would be helpful to include some background information on configuration theories to provide context.

3. I found the methods to be confusing. This is because the ASTAIRE tool and the PRALIMAP intervention are both complex and there isn’t the space to describe them extensively in the methods. The use of a flow chart may be helpful.

4. What do the researchers mean by a ‘realistic approach’? This needs to be discussed/described further.

5. In paragraph three, page 4 – the authors describe the PRALIMAP intervention and write ‘the aim of this action research project was to improve high school…’ I would change this to ‘the aim of the PRALIMAP intervention was to…’ to avoid confusion between the case study research reported in this paper and the intervention.

6. Include a line indicating that the study protocol of the PRALIMAP intervention has been published and further details can be found from Briancon et al (2010).

7. More information required about the interview schedule as this will have influenced the participant responses as to how often a CT factor was referenced. Also the wording of the criteria is complex and hence unsure how this would have been understood/interpreted by the participants – particularly the field participants.

8. Methods and results section of abstract could be re-written based on
comments made of these two sections above.

Major compulsory revisions

1. Authors have not discussed details of case study methodology employed. For example, what is the unit of analysis? What type of case study is it? (multiple case study?) Work by Yin and Stake may be helpful to clarify and add further detail. 11 schools participated in this research – therefore this does not sound like single case study research. Particularly because the schools were chosen to represent either successful or unsuccessful implementation of the intervention.

2. Final paragraph of page 4 – authors write that 11 schools were invited to participate based on the results of the intervention. It is not clear how a school was perceived to be achieving good results or poor.

3. It would be good to make it clear in the methods that this research is focusing on the ‘implementation’ criteria of the tool. This could be made clear in the aim/objective as well.

4. The data is interesting, however not presented in a manner which is easy to understand. It would be good to either:
   a) relate each of the result subheadings, which are different CT’s, to the study objective.
      CT15 is described with quotes and analysis being around communication and multidisciplinary teams. A clear link to how this addresses the aim would strengthen this analysis. For example, what was the response to this by participants in successful interventions compared to not successful? How did communication impact on the success of the intervention implementation?
   b) Present it as a thematic analysis
      The methods hint at a process of ‘thematic coding’, however the results are presented based on CTs and is very descriptive. The analysis could be improved with key themes being presented and discussed. I do not believe that using the CTs as a subheading in the results section is the best way to present the findings. For example, CT13d results section (page 7) could be under the theme of ‘impacts of top down approaches to interventions’ (or something along those lines) - with sub themes of ‘ownership’ and ‘management support’.

5. The analysis of CT13a and CT14b is poor. Further thought and discussion is required. There is much that could be unpacked here including the skill set and competencies required for health promotion interventions.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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 I have no competing interests