Reviewer's report

Title: Deliberative Dialogues Focussed on Healthy Public Policy

Version: 1 Date: 10 February 2014

Reviewer: Patrick Harris

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
Yes although ‘Public Health Policies’ should be better defined.
More writing about the points of deliberative dialogues as an intervention could be better described – policy analysis approaches suggest that the point of change is policy actors because of the different frames they often bring to a problem (as opposed to more structurally oriented interventions for intersectoral engagement like memorandums of understanding, capacity building, creation of organisational units and so on). This is not set up in the introduction but would add depth for the reader, particularly as the need to shift from individuals to systems is highlighted as a weakness in the discussion.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
The methods are well described. I am not a statistician but would question the use of linear regression / descriptive statistics on such a small and clearly not homogenous (policy makers, managers and others and researchers) sample because the results are in reality meaningless in terms of generisable significance.

The sample is well described but it would be interesting to have an idea of which sectors the participants came from (even disciplinary backgrounds)

3. Are the data sound?
Also while acceptable reporting percentages against a sample of 31 without the N seems to distort the findings.

The qualitative reporting to reflect what participants felt is good, as is the reporting of content of written responses. Mean ratings of constructs is appropriate but again variance and p values is distorted by the small N.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
Yes

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
Yes the discussion is excellent.
6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
Yes - I particularly like the risk of bias toward those who are already interested in evidence transfer.

The small sample should be highlighted as a weakness in terms of generisability.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
Yes although more, but brief, unpacking the theoretical underpinnings of deliberative methods would be interesting in the introduction.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
Yes although ‘healthy public policy’ and ‘public health policy’ could be better introduced to set up the study.

9. Is the writing acceptable?
The writing is excellent.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

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