Reviewer's report

Title: Deliberative Dialogues Focussed on Healthy Public Policy

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Reviewer: Marek Brabec

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Review of the paper:

Evaluating Deliberative Dialogues Focussed on Healthy Public Policy

Authors:
John Lavis et al.

The theme of the paper is certainly interesting. It is also difficult to grasp, both conceptually and technically (statistically).

The sample size of 31 together with the substantial chance of the sample being quite systematic and non-randomly drawn from the population of interest certainly gives a little chance of the inferences being capable of generalization. The authors should state clearly in the text limitations of this approach and their view of how broadly/narrowly the results of their inferential procedures can be used. In particular, questions like: What a particular sentence in the Results section means in practical sense should be answered carefully.

If we look at the sentence “Attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control predicted 67% of the variance in the intention to use research evidence (p<0.05) among dialogue participants.” as an example, it is not clear whether the authors want to generalize this finding beyond the very limited set of dialogue participants (the group will probably never convene again in exactly same composition) or not. On one side, the generalization is problematic and on the other side, if the generalization is not attempted, what exactly is the point of the study?

Perhaps, the methodological approach should be more interesting in the case of this paper. Nevertheless, the statistical methods used in the paper belong to the most standard ones, used in a very simplistic mode.

Taken overall, the text reads more like a report for a funding agency than as a scientific paper. The paper should be substantially rewritten and shortened prior to a publication. Perhaps, the revised text should emphasize the conceptual side (e.g. the structure of questions asked etc.) and not to try to use rudiments of a formalized analysis where the conditions are not suitable for it.