Reviewer's report

Title: Comparison of expectations and beliefs about good teaching in formal postgraduate medical education: a qualitative study.

Version: 1 Date: 27 December 2013

Reviewer: Christine Rubie-Davies

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions

Introduction:
1. The third sentence possibly relates to the higher educational setting but would not relate to other educational settings. This needs to be clarified.
2. p.6 Please expand on why there are negative consequences for residents if the teacher-learner relationship is not balanced, and what these consequences might be.
3. The first sentence of the first full paragraph on p.6 is incorrect as it is. Weinstein (to mention only one researcher) has completed a lot of work comparing student and teacher beliefs in the elementary school setting. So, if the statement only applies in higher educational settings this should be clear.
4. The third research question is not (and actually cannot be) answered in the current paper. Hence it either needs to be discarded or re-framed.

Results:
5. There is a discrepancy between the number of participants reported in the Method section (28 teachers and 9 focus groups) and the number included in the demographic table (17 teachers and 11 resident groups). These discrepancies need to be explained.
6. In Table 2, the teacher quotes related to teaching do not appear to emphasise a counselling role. I recognise that this is open to interpretation. However, “helping residents to analyse their experiences” and asking them to consider what an experience means to them could be interpreted as asking students to reflect on their practical experience(s) and to link this to their theoretical understandings. There is not necessarily any implication of a counselling role; supporting to students to link theory to practice, perhaps, but this is part of their teaching role. The authors need to re-consider their interpretation and discussion of these results. There would need to be more justification for determining that the teacher statements relate to counselling rather than teaching.

Discussion:
7. Please explain why when teachers and students agree about the educational environment that this contributes to a positive environment.
8. An assumption is made that the agreements are superficial and the
disagreements meaningful but neither of these value judgements are defined. What constitutes “superficial” and “meaningful”. How can a reader be confident that the discrimination is warranted?

9. The final sentence in the first paragraph on p.14 (carried over from p.13) refers to a “massive block”. Firstly, this is an emotive expression and has no place in a scientific article. Second, please explain why there would be a block when teachers agree. A block to whom, to what?

10. In the discussion, the authors appear to be making claims that the results are generalizable; the data are qualitative so they are not generalizable. This claim needs moderating.

Minor essential revisions

Abstract:

1. Learner-centeredness is not so much an element as it is a theoretical framework.

Introduction:

2. In the first paragraph there is a citation 34. Is this correct?

3. The final sentence on p.5 is definitive and yet the authors suggest that this does not happen. Therefore the language needs moderating. Perhaps: “They should discuss…”

Methods:

Participants:

4. The demographic information pertaining to the participants should be included in the Participants section, not in the Results.

Procedures:

5. The resident groups took part in focus groups, not interviews and so the correct terminology should be used.

Data analysis: comparison:

6. What are the four dimensions? This needs to be clear for the reader.

Results

7. The demographic table would be better placed in the Method section (sub-section Participants).

8. Towards the end of p.11 Table 2 is said to contain the dimension “relation” whereas it should be “relationships”.

Discussion:

9. In the Strengths and Limitations section, give examples of “underexposed consequences”.

10. p.15, it is stated that the authors considered bringing in an expert but it seems they did not. If this is considered a limitation, please expand.

Presentation:
1. Throughout the manuscript the authors use both US and UK spelling. Choose one and be consistent.
2. In line 4 of the abstract “of” should be “from”.
3. In the Method section of the Abstract, author’s team should be either author team or authors’ team because there are multiple authors.
4. In the Results section of the Abstract the words “were experienced” are redundant.
5. “post graduate” should be one word.
6. Hyphens and the spacing that follows vary in the paper. There should be no space following or before a hyphen.
7. There should be a colon at the end of the first complete sentence on p.9 and then the next two sentences should become one with a comma separating the two parts.
8. Correct “Cohen’s’ d” (p.9).
9. P.9 Table 1 and Dimension 1 are names (proper nouns) and so should be capitalised.
10. P.10 should be “general practitioners’ training”.
11. In Table 2, “good organised” should be “well organised”.
12. In line 3, p.14, there should be a comma following “approach”.
13. In the last paragraph on p.14, “plays” should be “play”.

Discretionary revisions

Abstract:
1. In the Results section of the Abstract, the second sentence is ambiguous; consider re-wording.
2. In the Discussion section of the Abstract the final sentence is clumsily phrased; consider re-wording positively, for example by beginning: According to the residents, the absence of a proper dialogue…

Results:
3. The first sentence on p.11 is ambiguous. Consider re-wording.
4. In Table 2, Knowledge and expertise, the teachers show an awareness of the need to understand and learn about pedagogy (teaching methods). It is hard to see why residents would think about this. It seems appropriate that they would focus on the knowledge they are receiving from their teachers. This is not necessarily a change for the paper but a point that is possibly worth considering.

Discussion:
5. The second sentence of the Strengths and Limitations section is not grammatically correct and needs re-wording.
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