Reviewer's report

Title: Quantifying culture gaps between physicians and managers in Dutch hospitals: a survey

Version: 1 Date: 13 June 2009

Reviewer: Peter Nugus

Reviewer's report:

This is a solid study and the authors have done a fine job at presenting it clearly. Although I am more qualified to consider the structure and subject matter of the paper than the methodology, the methodology struck me as being well described. The discussion and conclusions are adequately supported by the data. However, the study's relationship to previous literature, and, therefore, contribution to new knowledge, have not been clearly outlined. This will require some re-writing and maybe re-structuring, particularly of the Background, Discussion and Conclusion sections. Although the title current title would still be appropriate, the abstract would also need to be slightly re-cast. Comments under "major compulsory revisions" relate to this issue. Minor but, I believe essential, comments relate to expression and referencing. It means that the paper is not quite ready for publication.

MAJOR COMPULSORY REVISIONS:

1. The Background needs more orientation. As it is, it is too descriptive. A Background section needs to be more argumentative. The role of a background section is not to provide an "objective" history but to persuade the readers that there is a problem in the literature worth solving and this this study will do it. As such, points made need to be referenced, rather than presented as objective "facts". The historical overview may be important but the reader isn't guided to its relevance. The introduction/Background needs to implicitly link the research problem with a justification for the historical overview to help the reader appreciate what the study's about and what is new about it. An example is: "The history of ... shows that ... (suggesting the research problem)". The second sentence in the Discussion is a good example of such orientation. When the remaining points are addressed, the authors may find that the historical aspects are less relevant to other substantive issues eg. hospital reform, culture, quality and safety, to positioning the study in the literature.

2. The authors need to state clearly what the research problem is that is being investigated. An option is to state, after the statement: "Quite a few studies in other work settings ...", "Few/no studies have ...". At the end of that paragraph in the Background I was wondering: why is the present study needed? The contribution of the paper needs to be foreshadowed in the Background. Is it a methodological contribution? Presumably. How does the authors' version of the questionnaire relate to gaps/problems in previous versions eg. ref's 19 and 20?
Does it also make a contribution to substantive knowledge? The contribution of the study to resolving that gap/problem would also need stating in the first paragraph of the Conclusion. Presumably, it seeks to, or is capable of making such a contribution. What is the relationship between these contributions and the literature reviewed? Such explicit statements of contribution might only need two or three sentences.

3. Related to point 2, the contribution of the paper to substantive knowledge needs to be signalled explicitly. I found myself thinking this at the end of almost every paragraph of the Discussion. This might require more literature reviewing and re-structuring of the Background section. For instance, I found the point that "the larger the size of culture gaps the larger the latent conflict between professional groups" interesting, insightful and, as far as I know, original. But I wondered how this is a unique contribution to literature? What body of subject knowledge needs this knowledge/contribution? I wonder whether the point made at the end of what is currently the fourth paragraph in the Discussion holds the key. There might be a gap and a problem in what we understand about what is needed for hospital reform. This might require extra literature review to identify a clear subject-specific knowledge gap. The authors cannot claim a contribution to subject-specific knowledge if they haven't interrogated such literature.

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS:
Generally the English is clear. However, there is some ambiguity and some grammatical errors. Some particular statements need references. The following points may sound pedantic, but grammar is inseparable from meaning. The authors may not wish to take the specific suggestions, but the points below signal ambiguity that needs to be cleaned up in some way.

1. Abstract: Background: "is studied" makes little sense. Should be "has been researched"?
2. Abstract: Background: "aiming to suggest hands-on leads" makes little sense. Word/s missing or needs re-writing.
3. Abstract: Results: Between the phrases: "in the present situation" and "they are even larger" needs a semi-colon (;) not a comma.
4. Abstract: Conclusions: I believe the word "thereby" is more appropriate than "therewith". The same applies in the Conclusion of the paper.
5. Abstract: Conclusions: Remove the word "in" in the phrase: "focused on in current improvements ...".
6. Abstract: Conclusions: Two words forming one should be hyphenated: "decision-making". This applies to the same word under "Background: Measurement of culture gaps".
7. Abstract: Conclusions: Use the term "of" instead of "on" in two places in the second last sentence of the abstract.
8. Background: "the Netherlands" not "The Netherlands". Same applies under Methods: Development of the Culture Gaps Questionnaire, study 2: opening
paragraph, and in the first paragraph of the Results.

9. Background: Second sentence: "in" rather than "into".

10. Background: Remove the word "our" in the sentence commencing "Progress ..."

11. Background: Avoid whole-sentence quotes: "The hospital is increasingly ..." Suggest: eg. "It has been suggested that ..." or "According to x, ...".

12. Background: Following two sentences definately need references: "Nowadays ..." and "There is ...".

13. Background: Instead of "overhead" do you mean eg. "administrative overload"?

14. Background: The phrase "to get used to" is informal. Use eg. "become accustomed to".

15. Background: References needed in two sentences commencing: "Some believe ..." and "The cooperation ...".

16. Background: I suggest "the concept of culture" rather than "the culture concept".

17. Background: Same sentence: I suggest "as showing" rather than "to be showing".

18. Background: Need a comma after the word "artifacts" because "values and beliefs" is a pair.

19. Background: I suggest "Managers are less distinguishable" rather than "... less visible".

20. Background: Next sentence: Commas needed either side of "for example".

21. Background: Next paragraph: I suggest "Culture gaps" rather than commencing the sentence with "Gaps".

22. Background: I suggest: "argues that" or similar phrase, rather than "refers to this as" because it leads into what could be an independent sentence.

23. Background: Measurement of culture gaps: Small "w" for "western". Also applies in the Discussion and the last sentence of the whole paper.

24. Background: Measurement of culture gaps: Two sentences later: Commence with "They state" rather than "It states ..."

25. Background: Measurement of culture gaps: Next paragraph: Instead of "Next to this" I suggest "Additionally" or "alongside statements on ..., answers to statements in the preferred situation represent the desired order".

26. Remove comma after the word "system".

27. Methods: Qualitative pretest, study 1: I don't understand the sentence commencing: "Physicians are organized ...". It needs re-phrasing.

28. Methods: Qualitative pretest, study 1: Next sentence: I suggest "Following" rather than "As a result".

29. I suggest insert colon (:) after the phrase "The statements which we changed
were”.

30. Methods: Qualitative pretest, study 1: Next paragraph: I suggest a comma after "Because our goal is different from Kralewski’s".

31. Methods: Qualitative pretest, study 1: Shouldn't it be "... the goal of Kralewski et al"? If so, also change other such references eg. in the Discussion and Conclusion.

32. Methods: Qualitative pretest, study 1: Commas needed either side of "accordingly" in the same sentence.

33. Methods: Qualitative pretest, study 1: Next paragraph: The phrase "complete it" is more appropriately formal than "fill it out". The same applies ("complete" rather than "fill out") under Methods: National data collection with the Culture Gaps Questionnaire, study 3.

34. Methods: Qualitative pretest, study 1: Instead of: "assessing the personal perceptions", in the following sentence, I suggest "assessing respondents’ personal perceptions".

35. Methods: Qualitative pretest, study 1: Following sentence: Should be "format-related" (with a hyphen, having been derived from two independent words).

36. I suggest insert the word "such" in the last phrase of the paragraph so that it reads "further such remarks".

37. Methods: Development of the Culture Gaps Questionnaire, study 2: In the first sentence, I suggest "needs to be" is more appropriately formal than "has to be".

38. Methods: Development of the Culture Gaps Questionnaire, study 2: In the same sentence, I suggest "develop better response rates" is more appropriately formal than "get better response rates".


40. Insert "These hospitals were chosen for" rather than "... by".

41. Methods: Development of the Culture Gaps Questionnaire, study 2: The final sentence of the paragraph needs to indicate whether the judgement for the score of 0.65 was made by the authors or by others. It doesn't necessarily matter that the authors made the judgement by the readers need to know. Therefore, insert either a reference or state: "We considered 0.65 to be a sufficient ...", for example. The same applies to the second last sentence of the Methods section.

42. Methods: Development of the Culture Gaps Questionnaire, study 2: Next paragraph: I'm not sure what you mean by the word "taken" in the sentence comencing: "Combining the statements which were taken ...".

43. Methods: National data collection with the Culture Gaps Questionnaire, study 3: The sentence commencing "These 37 hospitals" needs a semi-colon (;) rather than a comma between the words "location" and "therefore".

44. Methods: National data collection with the Culture Gaps Questionnaire, study
3: Same sentence. I suggest the word "believe" is more appropriate and formal than "think" in this context.

45. Methods: National data collection with the Culture Gaps Questionnaire, study 3: I suggest re-ordering the next sentence: "We emailed an invitation to all physicians ... and managers ... within the 37 hospitals, who agreed to participate, to complete the questionnaire on our website".

46. Results: Culture gaps between physicians and managers: First sentence: I suggest inserting "a" before "total group level".

47. Results: Culture gaps between physicians and managers: Next paragraph: Needs a comma after "board of directors)".

48. Results: Culture gaps between physicians and managers: Insert the word "the" before "opposite direction" in the second last sentence of that paragraph.

49. Results: Culture gaps between present and future .... First sentence: Should be plural: "As shown in tables ..."

50. Results: Culture gaps between present and future .... Two instances of the phrase "18 out of 20 statements different" sounds awkward. Do you mean "differently" or "as being different"?

51. Results: Culture gaps between present and future .... Same paragraph: Write "one point" rather than "1 point" (in two cases in that paragraph). The same applies for "five/5" in the Discussion. Anything under 10 is written as a number except if it's "no.1" or "table 3" etc.

52. Results: Culture gaps between present and future .... Same paragraph: Comma needed after the phrase "provision of information" because the next two items are a pair.

53. Results: Culture gaps between present and future .... I don't understand the phrase: "the feeling physicians are autonomous but practice in the same organization for support services (no.6)". This needs to be re-phrased.

54. Results: Culture gaps between present and future .... The phrase "examples of the biggest difference" should commence a new sentence with a full-stop (period) preceding it.

55. Results: Culture gaps between present and future .... There should be a comma after "relationship among physicians" because the next two items are a pair.

56. Results: Culture gaps between present and future .... Same sentence: Should there be words inserted between "and the" and "open discussion"? eg. "need for" or "commitment to"?

57. Discussion: Paragraph 2: Rather than "Concludingly" (sounds clumsy) consider eg. "For the final version" if this is what you mean.

58. Discussion: Next sentence: Comma is needed after "Statistically".

59. Discussion: Insert "The following factors" rather than "The following reasons", or a similar word. Use either "factors causing" or "reasons for" but not the two together.
60. Discussion: Same paragraph: Insert "the USA" rather than "The United ...
because all will recognize it.
61. I suggest commencing a new paragraph for "Despite the differences ...".
62. Discussion: In the same sentence, insert a comma after "Kralewski's goal" (or
"the goal of K. et al").
63. Discussion: Next sentence: "retain", for example, is more appropriately formal
than "stick to".
64. Discussion: Next sentence: Consider "Further research could focus on", for
example, rather than "... study" (sounds awkward because researchers study).
65. Discussion: I don't understand the phrase "On statement gap level".
66. Discussion: I believe that the following sentence also needs re-phrasing. I'm
not what it means. Perhaps: "Managers prefer ... moreso than physicians" (??).
67. Discussion: I would remove the word "Furthermore" to commence the next
paragraph. You don't need it. Having said "Moreover" and "In addition" to
commence the preceding paragraphs, it becomes a meaningless transition
signal.
68. Discussion: Same sentence: I would insert the word "that" between the words
"statements" and score".
69. Discussion: In the same sentence there should be a semicolon (;) rather than
a comma after the word "situation".
70. Discussion: In the following sentence, there should be a comma after
"Therefore".
71. Discussion: The phrase in the next sentence: "wish it could be more
outspoken" is unclear. Do you mean, eg: "wish it could be spoken about more"?
72. Discussion: Final sentence: Consider "the need" rather than "the urge" (more
formal).
73. Discussion: Same sentence. No sure what you mean by the word "just". I
don't think it's the right word.
74. Discussion: Same sentence: remove the word "in" between "on" and
"focusing".
75. Conclusion: Needs a comma after the phrase: "As a result".
76. Conclusion: Last sentence of first paragraph: Briefly elaborate to remind the
reader (eg. one sentence) what these areas are.
77. Conclusion: Last paragraph, second sentence: consider amending to: "...
CQ-Questionnaire shows that, below the surface of the daily practice, the
relationship ...".
78. Conclusion: Rather than "enhance the cooperation" consider "enhance
cooperation between the two groups".
79. Conclusion: Next sentence: "At a minimum" rather than "At the minimum".
80. Conclusion: Same sentence: "increase awareness of" rather than "increase
awareness on”.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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.