Reviewer's report

Title: Effect of an institutional development plan for user participation on personnel's knowledge, practice, and attitudes. A controlled study.

Version: 1 Date: 13 May 2011

Reviewer: Barbara Stringer

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Although the initiative to perform a controlled study after the effects of development plans for user involvement is honorable, the question is minimally elaborated. Unclear is precisely why and in which way an effect is to be expected of a development plan on knowledge, practice and attitude regarding user participation. I would like to advise the authors to explicate these aspects in their introduction. Additionally, an elaboration on the positive effects of user involvement, more than a few references, would be advisable.

2. Although this was not a validation study on the CPQ, the validation of the CPQ was limited, when used in a different language. Only face validity has been assessed. As far as I can see, the original author has not been asked to assess the quality of the back-translated version. No factor analyses were performed to assess the subscales of the questionnaire. Reliability tests were not performed to assess the quality of the questionnaire after translation into Norwegian. Unclear is how the experience of Richter et al. (2009) is used, when they used this same questionnaire in their study. In the discussion section none of these limitations and their possible consequences for the results are mentioned.

3. I consider the choice to perform post-hoc analyses with the total sample rather debatable. No rationale is given why the authors made this choice. Neither is it explained in the statistical analyses. The first paragraph of the discussion states that no effects were found of a development plan to enhance user involvement. But that a tendency was found towards a more positive development in the total sample. That is in itself a positive finding, but not congruent with the introduction and the objective of the study. The objective was a controlled study after the effects of a development plan and no significant effects were found. To mark the controlled study as a major strength of the study and concurrently devaluate this fact by taking the two groups together is questionable. The paragraph ‘Personnel’s views about user participation are generally evolving’ is not supported with literature or other research and based on the findings in the total sample. In my opinion too much value is attached to the findings based on the total sample. I would advise to delete table 5 and to reveal the rationale to attach so much value to the findings based on the total sample.

Minor Essential Revisions
1. I had some difficulties to understand the text. Rather uncommon words or phrases are used. I would strongly advise to ask a native speaker to edit the text.

2. I would consider a different word for 'personnel'. Consider professionals or staff.

3. The word ‘cardinal’ (p. 3 background) is in my opinion uncommon, I would consider a different word.

4. The word ‘sanctioned’ p. 5 is rather uncommon, I would consider approved.

5. p. 5 subheading implementation; I would consider to change ‘oversee’ in supervise.

6. Sentences do not begin with numbers usually. P 7; ’12 of the ….’ ; ’11 of the ….’; p. 8 ‘9 %….’.

Discretionary Revisions

1. The samples were not matched, which could be seen as a weakness, because of the fact that is asked after private opinions regarding several aspects of user involvement. I would have expected that this was mentioned as a limitation of the study in the discussion section.

2. The paragraph at the end of page 7, starting with ‘12 questions…..’ is very detailed, but not all the information is relevant. I would advise to shorten or rewrite this paragraph.

3. P. 8 statistical analyses; I am used to assess potential confounders based on the change in the B-value, rather than to assess the p-value. A change in b-value > 10% is considered as a common cut-off for potential confounders.

4. There are 5 tables containing much similar text. I would advise to delete table 5 and try to combine table 3 and 4.

5. In the result section in the paragraph ‘changes within the group’ is stated that there are no systematic differences between the two groups at baseline. I wonder if and how that is tested. I could not find this information in one of the tables.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare to have no competing interests.