Reviewer’s report

Title: Beyond the Frontiers of Effectiveness: A Framework and a Measurement Instrument for Sustainability of Work Practices

Version: 1 Date: 27 July 2010

Reviewer: Oliver Groene

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

I enjoyed reading this manuscript. The authors address an important and under-researched question: what is the sustainability of quality improvement processes after the project finishes? This research question is clearly stated and well justified.

The research goes on to describe the development of a theoretical framework which is then subsequently used to develop a measurement instrument of sustainability of quality improvement. The theoretical framework draws on the distinction between routinization and institutionalization which is clearly described and in essences reflects individual and institutional requirements for sustainability. However, I expected some justification why theories of organizational learning are not specifically mentioned in the context of this research question.

The methods are described in detail, including the statistical analysis using structural equation modeling. The sample size of the study (n=112) is, as the authors themselves note, limited, and response rate biased towards one group of participants (managers). The limited sample size is even more a concern after applying list-wise deletion of cases in the statistical analysis, resulting in a small sample of n=33. The authors then use multiple imputations of missing values to reach again a sample of 112. Usually I would be concerned about this difference in n, but the authors provide appropriate justification of the method and clearly delineate its limitations.

The manuscript is well written and easy to follow and the discussion and conclusions are well balanced. The argumentation line and methodological approach is consistent. I expected a more in-depth discussion of related/similar assessment instruments: to what extent do they differ? Why is this instrument superior?

The discussion section could be more pronounced with regard to the generalizability of the model which was developed using data from quality improvement teams in nursing homes and long term care. The question of sustainability of quality improvement is also of high relevance in the more acute-oriented health care (where most of the quality improvement actions,
-resources and expenses are) and this could be briefly discussed. This focus of the article might also be reflected in the title (taking our the "Beyond effectiveness"): “A framework and instrument for Sustainability of Work Practices in Long Term Care”.

Table 3: it would be interesting to include a column with the sum of items of the instrument for each of the 3 developmental phases.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Bibliography:
- Review formatting of references 6, 19, 20, 34, 35, 36.

**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.