Reviewer's report

Title: Policy actors' perspectives on the role of stakeholders in Knowledge translation in health policy development in Uganda:

Version: 2 Date: 14 November 2012

Reviewer: Karen Daniels

Reviewer's report:

- Major Compulsory Revisions

I believe that this research is important and will make a relevant contribution to increasing our understanding of Knowledge Translation in Sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore I think it is very refreshing to see that the first author is based in Uganda, and that there is a good mix between Ugandan researchers and Belgian researchers. However, this paper is not yet ready for publication.

Title:
Why is there a colon at the end of the title?

Introduction:

The introduction needs to be restructured. Background/introduction sections of all articles should be reviewing literature. Thus it is not appropriate to have a separate heading for the literature review, since the background section is an introduction to the context, the literature and a justification for why the study is important. If there are particular themes or issues arising from the literature that the authors may want to highlight then they could do so with sub-headings within the background/introduction, such as “Knowledge Translation Roles” or “Media and Knowledge Translation”. Currently, the heading “Literature Review” in the middle of the introduction is confusing.

The “focus” of the paper is stated 3 times – in the second, third and fourth paragraphs. The authors need introduce the topic of the study through the background/introduction, but state the aim of the paper as a final point before the methods. The aim should come after a logical argument which was built up through the background/introduction by an explanation of the context, problem and literature. I tend to order my argument in the background / introduction in this way:

- This is the context,
- This is the problem in this context,
- This is the literature which has addressed this problem,
- These are the gaps in this literature,
- Thus this study/paper aims to fill the gaps in the literature and address the problem in this context by ....(AIM). Given this context, problem, literature and
gaps, aim, it has been decided that the best way (methods) to address this problem is by conducting the research in the following way - brief summary description of methods, e.g. through key informant interviews. Thereafter it's easy to go into a full description of the methods because the authors have justified the need for the study and the need for the approach taken to the study.

The authors also need to check their references. Reference 14 in the background, paragraph 4 is incorrect. Furthermore one does not give the full title of a cited article in the text. One simply references the article when referring to it.

The authors refer to a “middle range theory” without explaining what a middle range theory is or giving a methodological / theoretical reference. Some if not many of your readers may have no idea what such a theory is, so they would need the guidance of an explanation or a reference.

So ... my main point here is that the authors need to re-order and rethink the logic of the background/introduction. A lot of useful information is given, but it needs to be presented in a logical argument or storyline that justifies this study.

Methods:

This is a qualitative study and thus the methods need to be far more expansive. A critically important aspect of qualitative research is that we the researchers are the main research tool. Thus this methods section needs to tell us the reader who did what.

- Who selected the respondents? Who approached them? How was this approach made (telephone, letter, email, approached them at meetings, etc). Was there any snowballing (one respondent suggesting another, the emerging data suggesting a gap in respondents, etc)? Was there any attempt to actively find diverging viewpoints (negative case finding)? Do the authors feel that they had reached the point of saturation in the kinds of participants they found and in the kinds of information they got from participants?

- How was the interview guide developed (e.g. from gaps in the literature, an awareness of the research problem in this context)? Who developed this guide (use the authors initials in the text to indicate this)? Was it done collectively (e.g. at a group meeting) or did one person develop it and then share it with the group for further review? What type of participant was it pilot tested on and how many participants were involved in the pilot? Did the questionnaire always stay the same for each participant or was there a degree of flexibility depending on the participants experience, job function, knowledge of the area, etc?

- Who did the transcriptions – the first author, a colleague, a transcription service?

- Did the initial notes and impressions made after each interview feed into the ongoing research process?

- Who conducted the deductive content and thematic analysis? How was it done (e.g. electronically, using the assistance of a word processor, cut and paste,
using analysis software, etc.)

- The sentence “Identified themes were reviewed by the research team independently and where interpretation differed, consensus was achieved through revisiting the raw data and discussions”, needs to be unpacked. Explain exactly who did what rather than just giving us the reader this small summary.

Results:

At first I thought that the first paragraph of the results needed to be shifted to the methods section. On second reading I think that perhaps the authors can keep it where it is, but include the heading “Experience of the participants/ respondents/ Key Informants”.

I really only have one key point to make about the results – if the authors say in the methods that they have done a thematic analysis then they need to organise the reporting of their findings according to these themes. Otherwise there is no evidence of a thematic analysis! Right now the results are organised around the roles of different stakeholders. This is a narrative summary, not a presentation of the themes. If the authors didn’t do a thematic analysis, then they need to change this in the methods, tell us what they really did, and report the findings in relation to how the analysis was conducted. I suspect that a manifest analysis was conducted in order to establish how participants described the role of various stakeholders. Although this is not a “deep analysis”, it’s not incorrect and the authors just need to say what they did.

I think it would be easier to read if the headings were on separate lines and if the quotes were indented, particularly those that follow a colon.

Discussion:

The discussion reads too much like recommendations with words such as “there is a need to” and “should” being used regularly. Try and separate a discussion of your findings in relation to the research problem and the gaps in the literature, from a list of recommendations and public health policy /knowledge translation implications.

Referencing:

Please check that your references make the point that you’re saying they’re making. As a co-author on reference 45, I don’t think that our paper suggests that professional bodies are not active in the policy process. Please relook at this paper as well as all other references to be sure that you are not misquoting the authors. If you like the following paper may give you a better overview than reference 45, which was an earlier paper:

Language:
The paper needs a language edit in terms of flow, argument and sentence construction.

- Minor Essential Revisions
  None

- Discretionary Revisions
  None

**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