Reviewer’s report

Title: Does Accreditation Stimulate Change? A Study of the Context and the Impact of the Accreditation Process on Canadian Healthcare Organizations

Version: 3 Date: 16 November 2009

Reviewer: David Greenfield

Reviewer’s report:

The paper examines “what kind of organisational changes does the accreditation process introduce within HCOs”. The study question and findings are not related or integrated in a suitable nor compelling argument. The paper is supporting the findings of previous research studies. However, at present it is not arguing strongly the uniqueness of its findings or implications. A problem is that it is not convincing in its argument. Additionally, there remain a significant number of minor writing/ editing issues that undermine the quality and credibility of the paper.

Major revisions

P5P3L2 The aim of the study is not phrased consistently with the explanation provided for using case studies on P7P4L1. That is, the aim is phrased as: “What kind of ...” and the methodological rationale is explained as case studies are typically employed when research questions ask “how” or “why”...

P7P3 After introducing a very comprehensive theoretical framework there is not an adequate explanation as to why authors have made the decision to “limit our discussion of the ways in which organizational changes related to contextual conditions, to the most significant”. Why was this prioritised over the other possibilities? The study is that it is arguing a cause and effect situation, that is, changes as a result of accreditation (P7P2L1); interestingly it is using a framework that locates changes within context, considering both internal and external factors. Are these two things consistent? Is the study examining complex change processes that by definition cannot be reduced to cause and effect?

P20 In Case 5, the two quotes presented are recorded as being about Case 4. This a significant mistake in either labelling, placement of the quotes or insertion of quotes.

P21P2L1 The phrasing “several findings that have not often been identified in the literature” is awkward. It seems that the authors are trying to say, in other words, the study supports the findings from previous research. Rephrasing with word such as this would make the text clearer and more direct.

The first (P21P2) and second (P22P1) findings are not related to the study question posed in the beginning of the paper (P5). Additionally, the second (P22P1) and third (P22P2) findings are not supported by the data presented.
These findings are presented as statements of fact rather than as having emerged from the information presented; the data is not convincing of these results. The fourth finding is related to the study question posed but is too brief in its examination of the issues. The following findings are not integrated and related to the study question in a suitable manner.

P24P2 The study offers one new finding that is overlooked as to its significance. That is, “the number of years that a HCO has participated in accreditation can effect the extent of the changes that take place.” Much more could have been made of the suggested learning curve associated with accreditation.

Minor revisions
The authors need to be consistent with their use of commas when using multiple points in a sentence. That is, when writing something like “...A, B and C” the paper alternates between having a “,” after the B at times and in other situations the comma is not there.

P5P2L7 and P7P2L3 the “;” between references should be a “,”
P8P2L3 AIM is not explained; the full title should be used as this is the first use of the term; the abbreviation is probably not required as this is the only time it is used in the paper.
P9 the paper states that there were 25 interviews, however on P10 it says there were 23?
P10P1 The number of participants in the focus groups, 32, does not add up to how it is explained on P9. That is, 8-10 employees per site X 5 sites = 40-50 participants.
P10 N-Vivo is written in three different ways: N-Vivo – NVivo – N Vivo - ?
In the Results section the five sentences introducing the case studies are all missing full stops.
P11P3L1 The “all” is not required.
The referencing of the quotes is not consistent. Some quotes, those on P12 have details, whereas others, P14 have no details, and others P18 have part details. Similarly, P19P2L10 and L13 The quotes has no referencing.
P13P1L3 The word “On” should be replaced with “At” so the sentence would read: “At the regional level...”
P13P2L1-2 The sentence could be improved by phrasing something like... “a new HCO and was experiencing its first accreditation.”
P13P3L13 The “leadership” has not been discussed. It would be more appropriate to phrase the sentence as “The hospital tried to hire physicians with leadership and administration skill, and these personnel, along with the...”.
P14P1L1 The sentence would be improved by replacing “Case2” with “the new integrated HCO’s”.
P14P2L3-4 The commas should be replaced with semi-colons.
P13P3L15 The “all” is not required.
P15P2L6 The “all” is not required.
P16P1L3 The “an” should be replaced with an “a”.
P17P1L5 The “in” should be an “at”.
P17P1L9 The sentence is awkwardly phrased with too many uses of the word “and”. It needs rephrasing.
P17P1L10-11 The sentence is awkward and needs rewriting.
P17P2L6 The words “Case 4” need replacing with “the HCO”.
P18 The phrase “board of directors” is inconsistently written. In Para 3 it has no capitals and below in Para 4 it has.
P18P3L5 The number 2 should be written, that is, as “two”.
P18P3L6 Starting a sentence with “Because” is awkward phrasing. An alternative is needed, for example, “The absence of a provincial faculty of medicine meant however the organization...”
P19P1L2 There should be a “:” after “... learning opportunities through”
P19P1L10 The sentence requires finishing, for example with words such as ... and very visible in their organization.”
P19P2L6 The sentence could be improved by rephrasing: ‘...different sites learn about practices at other locations...”.
P20P1L1 The sentence is awkwardly phrased and could be improved by rewording.
P21P1L3 The phrasing “good validity’ is awkward and possibility incorrect. A study has validity or not. This needs rephrasing.
P21P2L1 The phrasing “several findings that have not often been identified in the literature” is awkward. It seems that the authors are trying to say, in other words, the study supports the findings from previous research. This is clearer and more direct.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**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.