Reviewer’s report

Title: Using Normalisation Process Theory to Design Translational Research: A review of a speech and language therapy intervention

Version: 2 Date: 5 August 2010

Reviewer: GEOFF G LINDSAY

Reviewer’s report:

Is this a useful question?

Yes. The Bercow Review is a good starting point. The need to review the implications of speech and language therapy for children is important.

Although SLT services are primarily delivered from health, there is an important development of either education-based or joint health/education arrangements. Apart from organisational issues, these are typically characterised by differences in terminology (not ‘patient’) and conceptualisation (needs-based rather than diagnosis-driven). The research study accompanying and informing the Bercow Review may be useful: Lindsay et al (2010). International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders – latest issue.

1. Methods
Basiclly appear appropriate but insufficient information

2. Data
Lacks detail to allow a full judgement – the use of the five papers is appropriate but the identification of data and their analysis needs clarification

3. Discussion and conclusions
These require revision because of above

4. Abstract and title
These are satisfactory subject to the caveats as above.

5. Writing
This is generally clear and well presented, including tables.

6. Conclusions
This is potentially an interesting paper that relates on important areas of practice and draws upon an interesting model. The limitations essentially concern the data analysis and interpretation. The study is small scale (only five papers reviewed) but still potentially of relevance and usefulness to readers of the journal. I recommend revisions.
Major compulsory revisions:

Method

More information is needed. Five papers are specified and processes are defined with sub-components but the actual analysis is not specified. What exactly comprise the data for this study? What is the evidence that provides the synthesis and what was the checking process by May and Finch?

Results

Table 3 summarises the data but, given the lack of data analysis specification, this provides insufficient information. For example, how do the five studies translate into these qualitative data? Do they reflect elements found in all five studies or is a minimum number of references (1?) required? What are the data - quotations from parents? interpretations by the original authors? by the present author? The Results refer at various points to examples but these vary, e.g. p.10 line 6 ‘Pennington and Thompson reported….’ But at other times Table 3 is presented as the evidence: e.g. p.10 line 11 ‘From the data in Table 3 it is evident that…’

There are also interpretations in the text whose basis in unclear e.g. p. 10 line 3: ‘Parents start off…’ – evidence? And line 14, ‘… there is evidence in the data that the therapists focus on….’ (emphasis added).

In short, the basis of these various interpretations should be clearly specified. Given that this is a study of qualitative studies, the lack of direct quotations is surprising. This could be justified given the nature of the paper, but the link back to primary evidence must, I assume, be quotations in the originals?

It is also important to consider whether a lack of evidence in the primary source reflects a lack of investigation in that study rather than a negative finding per se.

Finally, and echoing my early point, the quantification of qualitative data, as a research method, requires discussion. I consider this appropriate here but it is inconsistent (see above).

Discussion

Limitations reflect the issues raised above. Also, this section includes interpretations of associations which are not necessarily evident. There are references to changes (e.g. para 1) in SLT delivery on the basis of users’ perspectives, suggesting a causal relationship. Later in para 1 there is reference to proportions (‘Parents were more likely to rate success….) – where is this evidence? See also references to ‘wide discrepancy’ and ‘results in more parental satisfaction’ (emphasis added – both p.14).

I am unclear about the meaning of p.15 para 1 last sentence.

Discretionary revisions:
Referenced work that may assist contextualisation of the study within current UK government policy developments

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**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