Reviewer's report

Title: Evaluating methods used to teach quality improvement to undergraduate healthcare students - what works for whom, in what circumstances and why? A protocol for systematic review to inform curriculum development within pre-registration nursing.

Version: 4 Date: 16 October 2014

Reviewer: Huw O Davies

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In brief, the authors are to be congratulated for the sweeping changes that they have made, largely to the improvement of the proposed review. It is now much more clearly focused, and they have clarified how they are theorising about intervention action and outcomes so that they can more readily integrate across studies. That said, I do still think that they rather underestimate the difficulty of the task before them. In particular, although Realist Synthesis provides a neat encapsulation of the need to figure out contingent effects (what for whom, where, when, how etc.) it is still really difficult to operationalise by teasing out CMO interactions that are supported empirically. Moreover, the authors themselves assert (bottom of p5) that the available empirical base is meagre and of poor quality (so why would you think that synthesising it will yield robust insights?). That said, I suppose I feel it is not really my place to dissuade them from trying...

More minor points: despite saying they have clarified that they are interested in educational methods, the intro still discusses curriculum development; a revised section describes new ways of assessing the quality of individual studies, but says little about how this assessment will shape the synthesis (p12); and the Data Synthesis section (p13) still seems vague to me, being very reliant on discovering CMO configurations (which I think is easier said than done). The manuscript also contains quite a few typos, suggesting a bit of a rushed job.