Reviewer's report

Title: Implementation of health promotion programmes in schools: An approach to understand the influence of contextual factors on the process?

Version: 1 Date: 06 Mar 2017

Reviewer: Louisa Peralta

Reviewer's report:

Dear Authors,

RE: PUBH-D-16-02714R1 Manuscript Title: 'Implementation of health promotion programmes in schools: how do interactions between contextual factors influence the implementation process to result in variable programme impact?'

This paper has the potential to contribute to the school-based health promotion literature, as often implementation of such programs, as well as contextual factors, impacts on whether outcomes are achieved or not. This has been emphasised in school-based literature for many years. What this paper brings is a new approach to assessing implementation and contextual factors. However, I am hesitant to support this new approach without further justification. Please find below my comments.

Major revisions:

Methods (page 6): You state how this new approach is different to program fidelity measures and outcomes, but another useful area of research has been the testing for mechanisms or mediators and moderators on outcome measures. This is not mentioned in the methods to highlight differences or contributions this new approach will bring to existing literature. Yet, in the results, moderators are mentioned (page 13). See research conducted by Lubans, Baranowski.

Methods (page 7): Program theory is not clear. What was the underpinning theoretical framework? What were the expected outcomes of the health program program? What were the potential contextual factors? This should be outlined in this section, with the analyses framework moved to the end of the methods section.
Methods: It would have been useful to include more detail about contextual factors (e.g., professional learning/development sessions breakdown (content, pedagogy, activities, etc.). This may have helped with discussing the impact of these on outcomes.

Results: I am not sure that the realist evaluation builds upon what researchers focusing on school-based health promotion programs already know? You need to make a stronger case for using this evaluation framework, as currently I believe that a content analysis of documentation and semi-structured interviews would replicate the same findings.

Minor revisions:

Grammatical errors throughout.

Thank you, Reviewer.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited
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