Reviewer's report

Title: Training hospital managers for strategic planning and management: a prospective study

Version: 2 Date: 10 October 2014

Reviewer: Walter Sermeus

Reviewer's report:

Interesting article. It describes the short-term effect of a training for teams of hospital managers on developing SWOT analysis on the hospital strategy.

p. 5 The aim of the study should be clearer, more concrete (more simple).

The design of the study is clear (pre-post pre-experimental design). The weak point is that there is no control group. So we don't know for sure that we measure the effect of the training (it could be effect of teams just working together for a second time; it could be the effect of time, ....). This design limitation should be clear stated in the discussion section.

p. 7 The four strategies are interesting. I would like to see in the results a table in which the authors are describing the distribution of the 4 strategies: pre and post; if the teams change strategies (pre to post); if some strategies are evaluated better than other strategies. So far in the analysis not much is done with this information.

p. 9 (line 228) the evaluators are using a questionnaire with 39 questions. It would be interesting to have the questionnaire enclosed. On p. 10 (line 259) 13 variables are used in a PCA. Why these variables and not all variables?

line 251, ICC is used for measuring the reliability in scoring among reviewers. How many reviewers are involved? What are the characteristics of the reviewers? How many SWOTs are reviewed per interviewer? How many interviewer do we have per SWOT? My understanding of the data is that a SWOT is available per team (and not on the level of individual team members) as well pre and post training. Why is ICC used (and what type of ICC). Why weighted kappa is not used?

I don't see why the PCA is performed separately for the pre-data and the post-data. The PCA is used to look for a latent variable structure. It is useful to look for a latent structure on all data. It would make the analysis more easier and the interpretation much more straightforward.

Table 4. p. 26. I don't see the point to analyse the data of pre- and post separately in the linear modelling. It seems to be more interesting to calculate a difference score post-pre and perform the regression to explain the difference (what would be the training effect).

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests