Reviewer's report

Title: Process-oriented evaluation of an international faculty development program for Asian developing countries: a qualitative study

Version: 0 Date: 30 Jun 2017

Reviewer: Ahsan Sethi

Reviewer's report:

It is a good evaluation of a fellowship programme from an interesting context. However, I was expecting some methodological innovation for example a realist evaluation i.e. Exploring the mechanism - Outcome - Context - Programme theory? or use of CHAT theory. Below I have discussed some areas which require further attention.

Abstract: The recommendation is very general - Please add specific recommendations you have from your findings

Introduction:

Line 72-72: Either stick with the term Fellowship programmes throughout or briefly discuss/mention other faculty development programmes e.g. workshops, seminars and postgraduate Certificate, Diploma and Masters. Discuss some literature on the impact of such FD programmes - A comparison of Fellowships with Masters? Also if your study has any implications for these Masters programmes, which are more common these days. You should discuss your fellowship programme in comparison to other fellowships as well e.g. In USA, the fellowship programme extend over one to two years where faculty members, along with performing their usual job, commit 10-20% of their time for professional development. Yours was 8 weeks and out of their workplace environment and country.

Line 74-76: I do not think south asian countries have scarce opportunities. I think WHO has done quite a lot in this regard for the developing world. They opened collaborating centers for training in research and educational development of health personnel in 1979 in some Asian countries including Pakistan. A lot of Masters in health professions education programmes have also started in the last few years.

Line 77-86: The emphasis on non-english speaking countries suggest that the medium of instruction in your fellowship was not English. However, I was surprised to find out that not only the medium of instruction was English (Okay acceptable to some extent - resource limitations)
but the interviews with the participants were also conducted in English (Line 159). I am not sure if this allowed for free flow of expressions and indepth reflection on their experiences.

By 'fellows perspective' in the paper - you meant those studying or those graduating? This along with professional background, age, gender should also reflect with their quotes in the tables.

O'Sullivan and Irby's model is useful - You have based your analysis on this model. I think you should discuss this model in detail and add some critique aswell

Methods:

Line 119: A 'qualitative approach' is not a methodology or study design - what qualitative approach was used in this study? What Methodology?

Line 120-122: The reason for qualitative approach is not clear.

Line 133: Expand on the requirements - eligibility criteria for the programme

Line 135-136: The relationship of authors with the programme and the participants needs clarity. Were they just facilitators or also involved in Assessment? Recruitment process of the participants for the study needs clarity as well esp. when the authors accept that power relations have a big role in their culture. One of the author was involved in selection of these fellows while others were teachers. This relationship might have resulted in all the fellows feeling obliged to participate in this study. I have concerns about the quality of data considering these power relations. You need to discuss reflexivity and ethics.

Line 167-169: How this role of being insider might have effected the data analysis and interpretations.

Line 175: You have mentioned constant comparison method as part of analysis - So were there any differences among fellows from different professional backgrounds or age groups or gender or nationality?

The concepts of data saturation and member checking have been contested in the literature. You have claimed saturation by taking 10 group and 8 individual interviews from 8 fellows (e.g. Line 423-425). I am not sure if using different qualitative methods with the same participants will ensure saturation but it may result in redundant data. Can you please justify using both the methods? Briefly discuss the questions you have asked in the group and individual interview?

Line 160-161: You have mentioned observing non-verbal interactions - I could not find any related data or analysis or themes.
Findings:

Your findings mentioned that the programme was effective because it allowed enough time for practice? It was an 8 weeks course with 10 modules from Sept-Dec 2016 - I think this is quite intensive. Also you have submitted this paper in June 2017, I am not sure if interviews were taken after giving them enough time for practice?

Lack of consensus among faculty member (Line 230-234, 592-593) - Are these the faculty members of the fellowship programme or fellows workplace?

Line 284-285: One of the theme was relevance and called as a strength of the programme. I was wondering that if it is because you have selected/interviewed the relevant people for this programme? In line 305-313: These participant were reported as heterogenous and topics could not be covered indepth - Then how these topics were relevant earlier?

Discussion and Conclusion:

You have used the term 'procedural factors' (Line 338, 438) for the themes/findings in this paper. I think not all the themes were procedural factors and many were simply the anticipated barriers towards transfer of learning to the workplace. Please use a suitable word throughout.

Improve sentence structure e.g. Line 348-350, 407-408.
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.

Unable to assess

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:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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