Reviewer’s report

Title: Improving health promotion through central rating of interventions: the need for responsive guidance

Version: 0 Date: 11 Apr 2017

Reviewer: Bridie Evans

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this paper. The authors have made an extensive study and this paper reflects a lot of time and thought.

Background

p3 line 9-11: The sentences 'in such an approach....benefits' are difficult to follow. Do you mean that people follow the most effective approach? Who are the beneficiaries who benefit?

p4 line 2: feasibility AND EFFECTS?

The Effectiveness Rating System

Please say more about how the criteria on the ERS ladder were chosen, by whom and on what basis - evidence, how others do it...??

Data analysis

Please explain why summaries and transcripts of the interviews were made and why it was the summaries that were used to identify themes. The process of identifying the themes is not clearly explained. Since transcripts are more accurate, why was this approach taken? As presently described, it appears to be flawed. This section would benefit from a revised description of the analysis.

Please explain how quotes were selected for the results section and how they are identified.

The COREQ checklist should be used to report qualitative data (https://www.equator-network.org/reporting-guidelines/coreq/)

Description of sample

p6 line 5: members OF government
p6 line 9: health promotion practitioners IN or STAFF FROM municipal health service

p6 line 9: rather than secondary, clearer to say 'some participants had multiple secondary positions...'

p6 line 10: was the ERS committee referred to here being observed for this study? Please say either way

Any data about the length of time in post/experience of these respondents?

general comment about results section

Some parts were very clear and made good use of quotes. But this was not consistent across all sections. Overall it was long and easy for the reader to lose track of the story. The different views of the different respondent groups were not clearly reported. Quotes needed to be better used to illuminate the narrative. It was unclear what were data (and which source they came from) and what were not or how widespread the views were (disagreements/consistency?). Tenses switched between present and past, creating further uncertainty in the reader's mind. Make it clear what is reported eg. p11 line 52, 'some health promotion practitioners SAID THEY expected that...'

p10 line 9 was a good but rare example of linking comments to respondent backgrounds.

Role of involved actors

p6 line 36: 'made indispensible' is a confusing phrase. Considered a necessary requirement?

p6 line 32-3: 'Policy makers were expected...' - by whom? Did they do this?

Does this section describe data reported in the interviews? The source of the information in this section is unclear. If respondent data, please provide quotes.

This same comment applies to later sections. If all these results are interview data, perhaps it would help to have an introductory sentence to say this after figure 1. The switch between present and past tenses makes it very confusing.

Role of the ERS for actors involved

This section fails to acknowledge and explore the tension / benefits associated with this being a research dominated process.

The role of the ERS in two improvement dynamics
problems with effectiveness and the effectiveness ladder

How do the views of researchers and practitioners differ?

p11 line 46: it would be helpful to expand this title - the reader has forgotten the roles by this point in the paper. For example 'second role of the ERS identified by respondents

Discussion

how does the vision for the ERS compare to the findings?

First paragraph p14 does not summarise the findings - would be helpful here to draw it all together before moving into the discussion

second and third paragraphs p14: are these results or discussion?

p14: there are some confusing terms here which would benefit from clarifying or rewording: line 20 'a central arena'; line 35 'lack of norms for relevant effects'; line 38 'a partial closure of such normative...'

The lure of effectiveness - this is a good section. Is the phrase 'lure of effectiveness' one the authors have created or from the literature. If the former, then own it. It is very powerful. If from another, please credit them.

p16 line 23: how can 'it be determined'

Abstract
Results: The phrase 'lack of norms' is also used here. Without the body of the paper, it is difficult to understand.

conclusion: could you say who the guidance should be developed by and for whom. The conclusion could be written in stronger, clearer language to encourage the reader to turn to the whole paper.

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An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

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