Reviewer’s report

Title: Promoting the creation of R&D intentions in primary healthcare measured by a validated instrument

Version: 0 Date: 01 Aug 2019

Reviewer: Dylan Kneale

Reviewer's report:

This paper is an interesting contribution on organisational change, and how to change attitudes within an organisation. There were some issues that were in the presentation but potentially in the analysis also that would benefit from attention before this is published. However, I think that the material in this paper has the potential to form an interesting reflective organisational case study that uses a very long follow-up period to establish impact, and I hope that these comments are useful to the authors rethinking how to present what are likely to be findings that are useful for a wide audience.

- It was unclear to me whether this should be framed as an intervention study at all or whether it was an evaluation of how a national policy of mandating R&D units in Sweden was implemented in a particular setting. I think that even this type of study is of value, although I did find the language of intervention a little jarring in places as it wasn't clear to me whether the activities described were part of an intervention with a defined programme theory and clear aims and objectives, or whether they could be considered 'business as usual'. Perhaps a greater emphasis on describing what the goals of the intervention were, which aspects were associated as new or strengthened practices, and better linkage between the logic model and intervention description would help with this. For example, figure 1 suggests the intervention was phased but this isn't clear in the description.

- I failed to get to grips with the language of 'strategic communication' as a research field. I think better articulation would improve the introductory section. Strategic communication is described as 'the purposeful use of communication' which seems vague and imprecise. After reading the description it still wasn't clear to me if strategic communication was being used to denote a series of communication principles or specific processes/actions or both. Similarly what made some forms of communication strategic and others not was left to the reader to decide.

- On line 133 the description of primary care staff as being uninterested in research appeared pejorative. It may be more useful to talk about the way research evidence was being prioritised alongside competing demands? It also wasn't clear if this was being used in a general sense or about staff in a particular organisation.

- No information is given about what was included in strategic communication and whether the content of the message itself was considered alongside the communication method. For example on lines 170-174, low levels of R&D activity are described but a communication plan was put into place - but the content of this plan i.e. what was being communicated, is not divulged in detail.

- I got a little lost in describing the survey and the analysis. The instrument appeared as a checklist of activities and the original questions were not presented - so the timeframe is not clear as is the potential for recall error. As the items appear to be binary statements (have you read a research bulleting - yes/no) the use of factor analysis seems to be inappropriate for the data. Table 1 labels the time points as occasions. The validation process appears thorough enough but, as stated, I had concerns on the type of data (although this may be just an issue of presentation). However, a factor reflecting 'seminar/conference' appeared to be no more informative than a variable reflecting whether participants had attended a seminar or conference (if the constructs are binary - which is not clear in the write up).
There is also an item g mentioned but it's not clear what this is (line 290).
- The blending of constructs about an individual's direct engagement and indirect engagement in the factors, appeared to miss an important opportunity to learn more about the impact of diffusion.
- In the limitations the absence of baseline data is discussed - which makes it all the more important to know which/how questions were asked.
- The discussion section is a little meandering and includes uninformative subheadings e.g. main issues and general principle
- The paper is badged as examining R&D intentions but it's not really clear what this means
- The logic model makes it clear that ethnographic data were collected, and referring to these, or other published work from this study, may be useful in the discussion in outlining some issues that aren't discussed e.g. implementation issues such as staff turnover and the identification of role models.
- On line 106 there is discussion of complexity but this needs further elaboration
- The description of an evaluation 7 years after an intervention as short-term needs rethinking. Similarly, research seminars and annual conferences are described as oral communication channels, although this label doesn't seem to fit too well.

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