Reviewer's report

Title: Teasing apart 'the tangled web' of influence of policy dialogues: Lessons from a case study of dialogues about healthcare reform options for Canada

Version: 0 Date: 07 Dec 2016

Reviewer: Melanie Barwick

Reviewer's report:
This paper explores the utility and benefit of policy dialogues as a KT strategy to influence health policy in Canada. Specifically, the authors were interested in the extent to which they build capacity in knowledge, understanding, etc, among the participants. I've organized my comments by section below.

ABSTRACT
"Results: The results suggest the intended capacities suggested in the literature were developed among the participants at these dialogues". This is unclear; what do you mean by "intended capacities in the literature"? I think you mean to say that the potential benefits of dialogues discussed in the literature were evident among the participants.
"Conclusion: We present an enhanced conceptual framework that further explicates the potential influence of policy dialogues on the content and mechanisms of policy development at various stages of the policy cycle." In this sentence, it is unclear what is meant by 'further'; further than what? Do you mean to say it adds to our understanding of?

INTRODUCTION
Line 58 - change to 'that have been used'… because you're talking about dialogues; or change to "As an approach to KT, policy dialogues have been used in ...."
Line 93 - care, not car
Line 96 - would be useful to define what you mean by 'capacity', as in the ability or power to do, experience, or understand something?
METHOD

* Did the same participants attend all dialogues?
* How many people were in attendance at each dialogue? Without this knowledge, it is unclear whether the sampling is sufficient. Also, please say more about the dialogue participants. It's not clear how 'participants who presented policy options at the dialogues' differ from the other participants who did not.
* Lines 145-147 - please include # of video recordings here; it appears later but would be best stated upfront.

RESULTS

* Lines 208-218 - how many of the respondents shared these views? In fact, this comment applies throughout the results section. The reader needs a better sense of how pervasive these themes were, and as mentioned, the size of the sample from which they were culled. It would also be important to know if the comments/themes stemmed from researcher, government or other stakeholders. Indeed, what other stakeholders (care recipients? the public?) were in attendance and were sampled?
* It's not clear what the themes are; are these captured by the headings? When you report "one participant" is this an illustration of a theme? Would be helpful to name your themes, even within subheadings, which I believe are overarching themes.
* How do you define 'powerful stakeholders' in a manner that would make your results replicable?
* Line 316 - typo in title
* Line 357 - deeper engagement compared to what?
* In a practical sense, who pays for the dialogue (venue, food, travel, etc)? What are the costs associated, and the related implications for this strategy?
* Lines 404-406 - are you sure you want to single out this ONE comment; pretty controversial.
* Lines 413-417 - how do these themes tie in to implementation of evidence frameworks; specifically, factors related to success change/implementation of evidence? Can you tie this literature in somehow? You use the Boyko framework in relation to short, medium, and long term capacities, but a conceptual framework pertaining to factors associated with
implementation of evidence would be useful here as well, and would improve the interpretation of findings (i.e., Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research).

* Lines 422-427 - so what then are the necessary preconditions for a successful dialogue?

**DISCUSSION**

* Line 458 - citations needed in reference to 'the literature'

**CONCLUSION**

Line 537; I think your findings suggest the benefits of policy dialogues, but given the limitations you've noted in the paper, I think it too strong to say 'important role'. They are one strategy, often combined with others in a multifaceted manner, to move towards or inform policy change. What you have described is what those involved experience, insofar as their recall and bias, about the experience and its potential impact.

If you tie in your organizational context factors to the CFIR framework, this will strengthen your paper because it will provide stronger support for how this strategy links to key contextual variables that are associated with successful implementation of evidence.

Overall, I think this paper needs a reworking to strengthen it and fill in some methodological gaps and to improve the discussion and conclusion. I also think this is a potentially useful strategy, and believe a paper such as this adds to the literature.

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Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

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

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