Reviewer’s report

Title: Leading for the long haul: a mixed-method evaluation of the sustainment leadership scale (SLS)

Version: 1 Date: 13 Sep 2017

Reviewer: Cara Lewis

Reviewer’s report:

I had the opportunity to review the revised manuscript titled, "Leading for the long haul: a mixed-method evaluation of the sustainment leadership scale (SLS)." The authors did an excellent job revising the manuscript in response to reviewer concerns, notably in clarifying their measure development process, situating their measure in the broader literature, and describing the important need for this measure in addition to the ILS. Simultaneously, although the authors build the case for the distinct need for a measure of sustainment leadership, and yet their approach to developing it (using the theory, research and process of developing the ILS and then changing referents) does not support their claim. Moreover, their mixed methods approach seemed to undermine the utility or meaning of the data collected, and there remain conceptual issues with their construct operationalization and its alignment with the measure items.

Major Revisions

* This reviewer does not feel the response to major issue #5 from the initial review was sufficiently addressed. If the authors did not wish to use the qualitative data to validate or expand on the conceptual clarity and appropriateness of the quantitative measure then it's unclear what purpose the qualitative data served. The integration of mixed methods feels quite selective. That is, it seems the authors have missed an opportunity to refine the SLS based on their good qualitative data, but are choosing instead to go with their literature review on the ILS to confirm its validity, which somewhat contradicts the authors' statements about ILS and SLS needing to be quite distinct.

* Similarly, the authors seem to argue for the distinct predictive utility (or simply composition) of sustainment leadership and yet they were very much reliant upon the ILS to build the sustainment measure with no additional theory, implementation relevant expertise, or empirical work brought to bear in the introduction or discussion.

* Although the authors have now adopted a published definition of leadership, it is clear that their scale items do not derive from this definition. Accordingly, there remains concern about the construct validity of the resulting measure. The "embedding mechanisms" discussion on page 14 more closely aligns with the items and so it may actually be useful to rethink the specific construct they seek to measure in that it may not broadly be "sustainment leadership." This may seem like a minor point, but our field struggles with conceptual clarity and the authors have great potential for shaping the field in methods of measure development.
Minor Revisions

* The word "framework" shows up twice in a row in the methods section of the abstract.

* The word "of" is missing from line 46 on page 13.

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