Reviewer’s report

Title: Identifying factors which enhance capacity to engage in clinical education among podiatry practitioners: an action research project

Version: 3 Date: 25 June 2015

Reviewer: Anita Raspovic

Reviewer’s report:

The authors are to be commended on their research in such an important professional area, podiatric education and clinical supervisor capacity; clearly much work has gone into this work which is part of a larger project. The paper has improved from the initial submission, however in my opinion the structure and writing style requires further development before publication. In some areas the paper is very clear, however in other areas the relevance and flow of the writing deviate too much from the main topic. In other places, more specific detail and discussion would add. My specific recommendations are as follows:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The initial background to the paper is good, however this section in its entirety is quite long and tends to deviate from the topic, particularly towards the later part. Specifically consider the following:

- Whether the last paragraph of the section titled, ‘placement environment’ (starting from “In addition to these elements……”) is directly relevant to this topic. Perhaps the point could be made more succinctly?

- The section titled, ‘Capacity and capacity-building in clinical education’ – while this is very interesting and raises some very important points about clinical placement capacity, the discussion here is long and not directly related back to the topic at hand (clinical educator capacity). Perhaps this section belongs in a separate paper related to the larger suite of work being conducted by the researchers, or maybe key concepts could be condensed and discussed in context of the primary focus of the paper.

- The section titled, ‘Conceptual framework’ – again, very interesting however is this relevant to this paper? If a future direction, perhaps it can be summarised in a few sentences and moved to an appropriate place in the discussion?

2. Methods - This section requires work to improve clarity. It is not 100% clear how the first section (titled Action Research Team) relates to the data collection section and requires better linking. It is suggested that details of the CECE tool are provided here, including any references to its development and validation. The methods section should be presented in enough detail that anyone could replicate the study should they wish, therefore it is suggested that adequate details of what was done are expanded upon. For example; how were the 15 podiatry departments selected, who is ‘the sample’ section referring to (how does
this relate to the 15 podiatry departments?), why were non-parametric tests used and exactly what comparisons were made (how many, between which variables, was the alpha level adjusted to account for type 1 error rate due to multiple comparisons etc).

3. The results section refers to hypotheses testing however no hypotheses were framed earlier in the paper. The numerous hypotheses listed in Tables 1 and 2 provide key detail on discrete study research questions, which would have been useful to read at outset. Consider reducing peripheral discussion in the background section (see points below) and increasing discussion on key research questions / study hypotheses sooner. In addition, consider alternative options to presenting these ideas and related data in a way that might be more digestible to readers, rather than large lists of hypotheses in table format.

Minor Essential Revisions

4. Abstract, methods: consider making the final statement in the conclusion more explicit to the study findings. Should this perhaps refer to ‘good clinical supervision’ rather than ‘good clinical education’ more generally?

5. Background: Consider expanding on the statement in the 2nd sentence of the background section where it states that clinical education plays an important role in the development of students’ practical skills. While this is a good point and very true, consider referring to broader competency development in terms of key professional skills, knowledge and attributes (rather than more narrowly referring to manual skills)

6. Should the aim be presented under a separate heading or should this sit at the end of the background (introduction) – please check JFAR protocol / preference.

7. The discussion raises some interesting points but could be developed further to pick up on the complexities and detail presented in the study results.

Discretionary Revisions

8. Abstract, methods: It may be useful to note that the clinical educators recruited in this study were podiatry clinical educators

9. Use of wording: There are several sentences where the author might consider simplifying the sentence to enhance readability. For example, in the aim (pg 10), it states that; “The aim of the research was to survey podiatry clinical educators across 15 English speaking Trusts using the CECE scale to explore factors thought to predict the variability of clinical educator capacity to engage in the mentorship role, thus developing capacity-building for healthcare training in podiatry.

This sentence might be reduced to read something like: The aim of this research was to explore predictors for podiatry clinical educators to engage in the mentorship role.

10. Check JFAR protocols to see if higher education should be capitalised or not
(as it is in throughout the paper).

11. Background, sentence 3: Please specify that “effective clinical education, which in the UK is facilitated through formal collaborations between higher education institutions and the NHS.”

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests