Reviewer's report

Title: From novice to expert: A qualitative study of implementation facilitation skills

Version: 0 Date: 18 Oct 2019

Reviewer: Christine Cassidy

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript. This is a very well written paper on an important topic for the implementation science community. Readers interested in how to move evidence into practice and make it stick will find in the skillset outlined in this study useful in their work. I have a few minor suggestions to strengthen the analysis and discussion sections.

Background

Very strong background section that sets the problem up well. Clear that the authors have a strong understanding of the foundational literature on this topic.

Methods

It is confusing to decipher what methods were part of the larger study and what methods were part of this sub-study; further, it was challenging to know what data was used from the larger study and what data was specific to this study. Suggest offer a bit more clarification. Perhaps a table could help to clarify this?

Analysis

Suggest providing additional details on the initial code list of skills. Where did these skills come from? Clarify how many you started with from the literature and how many you added?

Please clarify who did the content analysis. On page 8, bullet points from line 18-45: Please provide some more details on whether two reviewers independently coded the data? How did the reviewers decide if a skill overlapped with another? Was it a group effort to draw the lines to show the overlap? What happened when there was a disagreement between reviewers?

Discussion

Important discussion of the overlap of skill set from this study and other facilitation taxonomies - this is important literature to integrate. Suggest adding a sentence or two to clarify the difference between a skill and a strategy? Many seem very similar, especially in the table (eg, adapt a
program to meet local needs; building learning collaboratives, etc.). How should they be conceptualized?

Context is a critical component of implementation, as outlined in the iPARIHS framework. Any consideration what conditions need to be in play to support skills? Is this something that needs further study or would the skill set work in all contexts?

As this is a qualitative descriptive study, I suggest changing the language from generalizability to transferability. The aim is not to create generalizable evidence - instead, the aim to provide trustworthiness data that readers could see being applicable in their context.

Was any consideration given to the EF (also the first author) conducting a self-examination of their skills? It appears so, but I suggest making this explicit. Perhaps add how any biases were mitigated in the discussion section. This is important for future researchers who wish to reflect on their facilitation activities in a rigorous approach.

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An article of importance in its field

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

Acceptable

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