

Reviewer's report

Title: Evolving the theory and praxis of knowledge translation through social interaction: A social phenomenological study

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Reviewer: Anne Elizabeth Rogers

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting paper of significant value to implementation science research and is well written presenting a clear exposition of the theory of social interactionism and social constructionism. The data are interesting and meshes well with the points the authors make about theory.

There are a few suggestions which I think would strengthen the paper

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Whilst the authors adopt a social interactionist/constructivist framework some of the categories they do at times adopt a taken for granted rather than critical perspective to key categories such as barrier and facilitator. This is attributed with facticity when evidence about the construction of these categories have been seen to lie in the discourse of individuals. This is discussed in an important paper by Checkland et al and seems important to take on board in the analysis presented here given that the metaphor of 'removing barriers to change' has been viewed to be of limited use in a context where non-implementation of policy may be an emergent property of underlying organizational realities which are only likely to be modifiable only if these realities are addressed. Checkland Kath; Harrison Stephen; Marshall Martin

Is the metaphor of 'barriers to change' useful in understanding implementation?
Evidence from general medical practice.

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2. The authors claim that social interaction approaches to KT have received limited attention – however they have received considerable attention in a range of process evaluations of new policy initiatives and complex intervention implementation. This previous body of knowledge deserves more attention and it is particularly important I think to illuminate how the current authors thinking and research builds onto or meshes with these earlier contributions. For example the authors suggest in the conclusion that “Firm

conclusions about specific strategies and solutions for KT cannot be drawn. Indeed, the human nature of social interaction KT precludes straightforward replicable explanations of how to go about this process, which inevitably contains as many socio-political challenges as opportunities for success. Implementation “science” will therefore perhaps forever be as much art as science”.

However there has been considerable progress in arriving at principles of evaluation which take into consideration both the nature of social interaction and social constructivism and some reference to and discussion of realist theories of evaluation and the progress these have made to 'implementation science' as a science as well as an art seems highly desirable. I am thinking particularly here of Pawson and Tilley's realistic evaluation/reviews and how these have been used as the bases of evaluating implementation new approaches in health sciences (see for example in relation to chronic illness management Kennedy et al Assessing the introduction of the expert patients programme into the NHS: a realistic evaluation of recruitment to a national lay-led self-care initiative Primary Health Care Research and Development 2005,2,137-148).

3. Some reference to attempts at theory building relating to implementation which address the problem of social constructionism and implementation of complex interventions would help contextualize the present study. See for example Understanding the implementation of complex interventions in health care: the normalization process model

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Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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