

Reviewer's report

Title: A Descriptive Study of the Magnitude of the "Tower of Babel" Problem for Knowledge/Information/Research Dissemination/Diffusion/Management/Synthesis/Exchange/Implementation/Mobilization/Transfer/Translation/Transformation/Uptake/Utilization

Version: 1 **Date:** 25 May 2009

Reviewer: lorenzo moja

Reviewer's report:

Comments on

“A Descriptive Study of the Magnitude of the “Tower of Babel” Problem for Knowledge/Information/Research/Dissemination/Diffusion/Management/Synthesis/Exchange/Implementation/Mobilization/Transfer/Translation/Transformation/Uptake/Utilization”

McKibbon et al Implementation Science

Scope

The authors set out to assess how many terms related to KT exist, how effective each of the KT terms were for retrieving KT literature, and how widely each term was used in the titles and abstracts in a collection of KT literature. Authors also considered a control group to measure the performance of KT terms against nonKT literature.

General

The paper is a derivate of a larger project aiming to develop a filter for a KT searching filter.

From a readability perspective, the paper is somewhat confusing, and the reporting could

be ameliorated. Authors criticize the lack of standardization in terminology, whereas they adopt their own terminology. Misinterpretation by others researchers is likely. Examples are needed throughout the text to allow readers to understand which KT components authors are referring to.

The bulk of the paper consists of tables, appendices and wiki. This requires a high degree of interpretation, analysis and inference on the data supplied.

It should be stressed that the KT terms are not independent variables since there should be cluster utilization. For instance papers which use the word dissemination are likely to use also implementation and quality improvement.

- Major Compulsory Revisions

Title

1. Although the title is now “fashionable”, it creates some confusion (i.e. this paper would go deeply in the meaning of all these terms, which is not). I would propose to change it in “A cross-sectional study of the magnitude of terms used to refer to knowledge translation: a Tower of Babel?”.

This title has an advantage in proposing knowledge translation – the term you are using across all the text – to other researchers as the possible ‘special term’.

Abstract:

2. In stead of presenting numbers of terms highly, medium and low discriminating, please list the main discriminator terms in the abstract (i.e. Implementation, adoption, quality improvement dissemination and complex intervention were high discriminator for all KT articles whereas change, etc were medium ones.

Objective

3. Please clarify that this paper is part of a larger project: clarify the overall program objective, the specific objective of this paper and how this output will contribute to the development of the KT searching filter.

Methods

4. First paragraph: please name phases of the project and use these names consistently across the paper (i.e. Tagging, Journal sample, KT terms list).

5. There are several points in which it is very difficult to understand the interpretation you gave to words and papers, particularly when you tagged. At page 10 you stated: Some KT papers were only tagged as KT (all KT) while other papers were also tagged as KT applications, KT theory papers, or both. Please provide one short example for each class, i.e. reporting a paper title clearly referring to this class [and reference if you are referring to a real paper]. The same could be done when you operationalize definitions: “Quality of care studies – this attends to the gap in care issue [TITLE and reference]”

6. Please list the 12 journals in the methods, divided in high and low-yielding.

KT terms

7. It is not clear whether the list of terms related to KT was generated before or during the analysis of the 12 journals. Although you state that the KT terms process was an iterative process, some clarification about time sequence would be appreciated.

8. The first part of the discussion (redundant) is not strictly related to the main finding - heterogeneity of KT terms - which account for the term “Tower of Babel” used in the title. I would privilege this opening topic in the discussion. Furthermore it is not easy to understand if 25 different words which discriminate between KT and non KT articles are too many, too few or a good balance for a scientific field like KT one. What about the other 75 words? Are these necessary? Or should we erase them by our KT vocabulary?

9. Please discuss the following limitation: terms reflect the state of the KT art in 2006. The usage of terms may have been slightly different in the past and would be different in the future because of linguistic renovation (a fact that is not negative in itself). Some form of standardisation across KT researchers would ensure stability in terminology over time.

10. Being able to choose specific lexical semantics, in those places where there is a choice - i.e., apart from the necessary technical terminology – is a scientific virtue. Please discuss that: a) there should be lexical networks in the KT field, and in these lexical networks the same types of words (and interpretation) tend to co-occur over a large portion of papers and authors; b) it is not the single word that makes any difference, but it is the meta-language (communication) that gives the right expression and interpretation; c) you did not use a linguistic perspective, although it may be very interesting.

- Minor Essential Revisions

The author can be trusted to make these. For example, missing labels on figures, the wrong use of a term, spelling mistakes.

11. Please move the very last part of the Introduction (from “We chose to look at only the titles and abstract...were associated with KT content”) to the Methods section.

12. Abstract: Please consider these changes

Varying yield of KT material – high and low yield of KT material.

The KT articles (all KT) were further tagged if possible for whether they described...

Thus the need for consolidation and consistent use of (fewer?) terms related to KT research is needed.

Background

13. Unpublished (grey) literature: This paper is about published literature; the link with grey literature is unclear.

Last paragraph (We chose to look ...) Why you did not consider key-words or MeSH? This would be an accountable effort if done to not being influenced by previous indexing.

Methods

14. Please consider these changes

Collected terms related to KT from titles and abstracts

‘Theoretical papers are useful for people who ... either in application or research.’ This explanation is not necessary given the audience of the paper.

The theory of Planned Behaviour in a KT study. Please provide reference.

15. Sample size calculations ... Initial scanning of titles gave us an estimate that... numbers of articles. The sequence is unclear. If you did calculate a

sample size, it is more helpful to give details and fully clarify how you arrived to hundreds of articles and 12 journals. If this is a pragmatic choice based on other studies, this should be again clarified.

16. Clarify that used cut-offs are arbitrary or follow some scheme.

Results

17. Second paragraph

[For this paper on term use by authors – pleonasm]

18. Please move “we used the 2594 articles that ... and 152 KT theory papers)” to first paragraph. I assume that the difference between 2603 and 2594 is a really small percentage of papers that MedLine does not index for some obscure reasons.

Tables

Tables are difficult to be read and interpreted.

19. Table 1 should be divided in two tables, first for overall results (Table 1) and second for high and low high and low-yield (Table 2).

20. Table 5 is missing. All the information on terms able to discriminate between KT and nonKT papers are reported in Table 4.

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