

Reviewer's report

Title: Building an interdisciplinary theory of implementation, embedding, and integration: the development of Normalization Process Theory

Version: 1 **Date:** 15 January 2009

Reviewer: Frances E Griffiths

Reviewer's report:

This paper describes the process of development of the Normalization Process Theory.

This paper is important as:

- The Theory is an important one for health care internationally
- The development of the theory has been robust and although it is possible to trace its development from the published papers, having the process described in this paper clarifies the process and learning and development at different stages
- The development of theory, or contributing to its development, is the aim of a great deal of health related research and so having a paper that explicitly lays out the process of the development of a Theory will be of great value for teaching and training new researchers, and as a guide to those with more experience.

I recommend the paper for publication with some minor revisions only (I have indicated whether they are essential):

Page 4 (section on Phase 1) – the two sentences after the references [2,9] need minor editing for clarity as it is slightly confusing as to whether the work was on studies about telemedicine or whether there was a range of innovative technologies (what was the focus of paper ref 8?). This is a minor edit only and not essential.

Page 7 'emergent outcomes' – a phrase I am used to from complexity science but not sure all readers will be – a phrase explaining would be helpful but not essential.

Page 8 sentence including 'decoupling macro- from micro-' The reader would benefit from a couple of sentences here, one explaining decoupling and another explaining 'examining the components of generative mechanisms'. I think there is an implication that the team realized the focus shifted to identifying generative mechanisms and their components – please make this clearer (Essential)

Conclusion of paper.

Essential – clarify what is meant by 'this' in the sentence third from end. I assume 'this' refers to mapping who did what in the collaboration, but this is not clear.

Although not essential, I would like to see the conclusion developed a little more.

The paper appropriately notes it presents a 'retrospective procedural description' of what happened. However, the team of authors went prospectively through the process. The conclusion could be an opportunity to reflect on the process and how others can learn from it. For example, how far the collaborations were strategic or opportunistic, whether the writing team envisaged the work developing the way it did.

A minor point (not essential) is that the conclusion suggests theory building is not usually collaborative. I am not so sure about that. Theory is often built on work done by many people and many discussions etc. The difference with this team is that they made the collaboration explicit and recorded it (also recognizing that others contributed who were not named).

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 have got to know the Theory through being peer reviewer of an earlier paper about the Theory and more recently contributing in a small way to testing its use on some empirical data. However, I have had no involvement (other than as a peer reviewer of a paper) in the process described in this paper.