Reviewer's report

Title: The national portfolio for postgraduate family medicine training in South Africa: A descriptive study of acceptability, educational impact, and usefulness for assessment

Version: 3 Date: 28 March 2013

Reviewer: Bryan Burford

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The authors have made a good job of addressing earlier concerns, and I think the paper is now much more accessible, and fits into the literature far more effectively than previously. I do still feel however that it could do with a further revision for length and focus, but I have no outstanding major concerns. As such all comments that follow should be seen as discretionary.

In the introduction the role of a portfolio in adult learning is much clearer, the referencing to workplace based assessments add a lot of relevance, and the link to the context of the study smoother than in the previous draft. The content on pp4-5 however seems slightly long and a further edit may help to focus it without losing any substantive content.

p6 would benefit from a paragraph break at ‘The setting of this study…’ and at ‘The national portfolio consists of…’. Also should ‘lever arc’ read ‘lever arch’?

p7 The inclusion of more detail of portfolio content is very helpful. I wonder whether it could be integrated into Box 1 for clarity (with the current table 1 as headings, the additional content as bullet points underneath), but this is minor.

The results also read more clearly and flow better with the new headings. I think the inclusion of the chi-square test that is retained is okay, although still not absolutely necessary.

p11 under ‘Time and format’ there are a couple of points of repetition, which could be précised (specifically a desire for an electronic format, and for dedicated time for reflection).

On reading this version it strikes me that value in the paper is in its confirmation of some issues in the European and North American literature in a different context (e.g. in the importance of support and feedback around a portfolio) – this is a useful finding and one that may be of value to medical educators in other parts of the world. I wonder if more of this could be made in the discussion/conclusion.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
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'