Reviewer’s report

Title: Accreditation in a Sub Saharan Medical School an Approach to Education at Makerere University: a case study

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Reviewer: Marta van Zanten

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The following comments are Minor Essential Revisions:

The title of this article is somewhat awkwardly worded. I suggest: “Accreditation in a Sub Saharan Medical School: A Case Study at Makerere University.”

In the Introduction, I wonder about the accuracy reference provided for the first sentence stating that currently not all medical schools in the world are subject to accreditation procedures. The reference provided is more than 20 years old. I suggest the authors use a more recent reference, such as a WFME or FAIMER publication.

In the Methods section, more detail should be provided regarding the “Quality Assurance body”. What is the purpose, scope and role of this organization? What sort of activities does this QA body do related to reviewing the medical education program at Makerere?

More information should be given to address the issue of how this process was conducted in a low resource environment. The only sentence on this topic states that costs were kept low by running several half days, which does not really adequately address the issue. Was this procedural decision the only mechanism for keeping costs low? One could also imagine that for stakeholders that need to travel to attend workshops, full days would have been more cost effective than half days. The role of Makerere’s partner organizations should be better explained in terms of the low resource environment issue. The inclusion of tips for other schools in low resource environments without international partners would likely be useful for other schools looking to replicate the success at Makerere.

The WFME Basic Medical Education Standards for Quality Improvement were revised in 2012. The authors should clarify that they used the previous version of these standards.

In the Results section, the purpose of Table 1 is not entirely clear. Is the purpose of Table 1 to only contain examples of standards that have the objective of enhancing partnerships, as is implied in the last sentence of the Results section? Or does Table 1 contain general examples of the standards agreed to in this process?

Table 1 requires improvements in formatting and content. For example, previously in the paper the authors indicated that they adopted the 9 WFME domains, but in Table 1, the domains are sometimes provided along with the
category of standards, and sometimes the domains are not provided, and some standards appear to fall under the wrong domain heading. For example, standards #22 – 25 (“Involvement of stakeholders”) appear to fall under domain number #5, but these should be under domain #6 (“Program evaluation”). The same issue appears for standards #26 – 29, these should be under the heading domain #8 (“Governance and Administration”).

Also in Table 1, some of the standards that are categorized as basic standards (Level 1) are written with the word “shall” instead of “must”. Previously in the paper the authors explicitly stated that they adopted the “must” and “should” differentiations in the WFME types of standards. Therefore it is unclear to the reader why the word “shall” is introduced in some Level 1 standards (i.e., #15 and #32). Do the authors intend for “shall” to mean the same as “must”, or is there some intentional wiggle room with the use of “shall”? In the Discussion section, the heading of “introduction” is unclear. Also, the paragraphs under “Methods & Techniques” that describe the participatory planning techniques do not belong in the Discussion. I suggest that they should either be moved to the Methods section or eliminated.

The “implementation” section and the Conclusions bring up some very important points. As the authors indicate, defining the standards to be used was perhaps the easiest of the steps involved in designing and implementing a system of accreditation. It will be critical for the authors to maintain the momentum developed during this initial stage of the process to ensure ongoing efforts are sustained and the next steps can be realized. In addition, the authors indicate that they hope the National Councils will adopt and work with what is already in place. Are there plans in place to facilitate making this goal a reality?

**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.