Reviewer's report

Title: Perceptions of graduating students from eight medical schools in Vietnam on acquisition of key skills identified by teachers

Version: 3 Date: 29 September 2007

Reviewer: Enoch Kwizera

Reviewer's report:

General

I am happy to note that the authors have attended to most of my concerns. However a handful remain, and appear below under "Minor Essential Revisions".

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

None.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

2.8.(under "Methods"): I am not convinced by the argument advanced for retaining under "Methods", material meant for "Discussion"; especially when the said material is actually repeated, nearly verbatim, under "Discussion". (i.e. Paragraph 2 under "Data collection" cf. Paragraph 3 under "Discussion"). Even in research publication, nothing is 'cast in stone', but authors are expected to conform to conventional practices (or norms) of communicating research findings to their peers; and pre-emptying "Discussion" for whatever reason is not part of such practices.

3.6. (under "Are the data sound and well-controlled"?): My concern about the legends to tables and figures was not about where they were placed in the manuscript, but was about their brevity, such that they did not help the reader get the gist of what the table or figure was depicting, without the reader having to resort to (re-)reading the manuscript or parts thereof.

5.3 and 5.7 (under "Discussions and Conclusions"): My use of "assessment" in the review was in the same context that the authors used the term in the abstract ("self-assessed achievement", "self-assessed scores", and "self-assessed skills acquisition") as well as in paragraph 3 under "Discussion". Thus clarified, I still expect the authors to respond to my specific concerns raised in 5.3 and 5.7 under "Discussions and Conclusions".

Under 7 ("Is the writing acceptable"?)
a. A new reference (#4) has been added. As this is an online reference, authors should state when (dd/mm/yyyy) they last accessed this link.

b. Is Reference # 6 a one-page publication? If not, then range of page numbers should be indicated as has been done with the other hard copy references (e.g. #1, 2, etc). On the other hand, BMC is an online publication and articles printed from BMC journals carry the advice (bottom right hand) that "(page number not for citation purposes)" -in which case the BMC article should perhaps be cited as the online publication that it is, along the lines of ref # 4 (including date when last accessed)

c. Ref #12 is the same as ref #8, and bits of the former are (still) garbled. Therefore, delete ref #12.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

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