Reviewer's report

Title: Strengthening health workforce capacity through modular work-based training

Version: 3 Date: 19 December 2012

Reviewer: Sharon Fonn

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The paper now has a different focus and is clearly restricted to a description of the training programme only. Nonetheless the programme is of interest in and of itself and thus a contribution to knowledge among those interested in methods to improve health systems and those who design training programmes. The description of how they have dealt with the challenges they have faced is also instructive.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. The one aspect that seems to be missing from the discussion is why so few public sector employees have made use of the programme and if this is a problem. For example if the public sector serves most of the population then this is a challenge that needs to be addressed. However if the NGOs include mission hospitals who may in fact serve a significant part of the population this may be less of challenge. Nonetheless some comment in the discussion seems to be warranted.

A few additional points below:

2. In the abstract it is claimed that “projects which resulted in improved access to health care services, reduced waiting time for patients; strengthened M&E systems; and improved data collection and reporting. Trainees' skills and competencies in M&E and CQI were enhanced and shared with other staff, with minimal interruption of their work.”

It seems that the authors are not taking on board previous critique of this article which indicated that unless they have proof of this, which they do not as the programme is as yet not evaluated, they cannot have this kind of statement in their abstract. The most they can say is that …. projects undertaken addressed issues such as improving access to health care services, reducing waiting time for patients; strengthening M&E systems; and improving data collection and reporting …. They can also say ….. The project aimed to improve skills and competencies in M&E and CQI and the design of the project was such they could share these skills with other staff, with minimal interruption of their work.

3. In the body of the article in the introduction sentence “Mentors, including institutional supervisors at the place of work, serve not only as role models, but provide professional advice, feedback, and general support during the
implementation of selected projects.” Insert “who” after “work,”

4. It is not clear, if doing a project was part of the programme, how – if 120 people completed the programme – there were only 66 projects?

5. In the discussion …
Our training program builds trainees' capacity to critically analyze work and management processes as well as systems through the initial face-to-face interactive sessions.
Remove “be able to”

6. Under your section on challenges
“Our assessment shows that majority of those who did not complete the training either took jobs with other institutions mid-way the training or were laid off by their respective institutions prior to the end of the training.”
Add “through” after “mid-way”

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

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