Reviewer’s report

Title: A framework for outcome-level evaluation of in-service training of health care workers

Version: 1 Date: 24 August 2012

Reviewer: Manuel M. Dayrit

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The article revisits the input-output-outcomes-impact logic model of programme management and applies it to in-service training particularly with a focus on HIV prevention and control. It purports to address the concern that PEPFAR funding for in-service training show value and gain at the trainee, patient, organization, and systems level.

The authors do well in that they combine a literature review with an iterative process with field trainors and managers to arrive at this framework. In this regard, their approach increases the possibility that the framework will be used by field workers. To this end, the creation of tools to better understand and use the framework moves it from the theoretical to the practical. Frameworks such as these live or die depending on whether they are used in the day-to-day flow of activities by those concerned.

The article is clearly written. As I read through it, I found myself applying the proposed framework to various other training programmes in which I was involved in the past: for example training of health workers in sputum microscopy for TB, use of oral rehydration solution, and vaccination. My impromptu exercise led to interesting insights about past work. It also led to the conclusion that quantifying the actual changes at the different levels and domains of interest (i.e. individual, organization, system) will still remain the essential challenge and goal of any evaluation -- the article’s proposed framework can only point to what actual measurements may be appropriate to deepen the evaluation.

Furthermore, as skills training moves up the ladder to more complex behaviours -- for example leadership, complex analysis of situations, or strategic thinking -- the proposed framework can only serve as a starting point and will need to be used with other teaching-learning methods.

I propose no revisions for the authors to undertake.

Minor issue not for publication: manuscript appears letter perfect except for a word towards the end of the second paragraph of the Discussion. I believe the authors mean “tenets” instead of “tenants”.

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 declare that I have no competing interests.