Reviewer's report

Title: Training for Health Services and Systems Research in Sub-Saharan Africa - A Case Study at Four East and Southern African Universities

Version: 1 Date: 30 September 2013

Reviewer: Siriwan Pitayarangsarit

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Data about HSSR related training in SSA institutions were only modules, infrastructure and facilities. There were no information on human resources and capacity of trainers in HSSR.

2. On the demand side, data were collected from current PhD students to identify motivating and challenging factors towards PhD training; however, there are potential clients that may be interested in HSSR training but were not investigated; therefore, there was a sampling bias to identify motivating and challenging factors to enroll PhD training.

3. The statement that link the number of HSSR PhD trainees at these universities and the required critical mass of locally trained HSSR professionals to drive the much needed health systems strengthening and innovations in this region was too simplified.

4. If the results provided more information on the capacity of HSSR training at SSA institutions including HSS researchers and HSSR funding, it will be possible to conclude that the current level of HSSR PhD training at SSA institutions is too low to enable creation of a critical mass of locally trained HSSR professionals.

Discretionary Revisions

5. Strength and weakness of local institutions on the HSSR training may be analyzed to provide more recommendations on the advantage role of local institutions on the HSSR critical mass building such as networking, sharing information, and transferring knowledge in addition to training.

6. Though the knowledge on the motivating factors to enroll or faced during the PhD training are quite useful but the paper lacks knowledge on the motivating factors to conduct HSSR during and after graduation.

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.