Reviewer's report

Title: Source country perceptions, experiences and recommendations regarding health workforce migration: A case study from the Philippines

Version: 1 Date: 11 August 2014

Reviewer: Ivy L Bourgeault

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1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?
   Yes

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?
   The methods are sound, well described with the exception of the data analysis which could be more fully described.

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?
   Yes.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
   Yes, the presentation of the results is clear but a little repetitive across the two discussion groups; it is not clear why the findings were not presented thematically across the groups as suggested they would be; nevertheless, the key findings are transparent.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
   Yes, but there is a good deal of new issues raised in the discussion which would be better situated in the introduction – to frame the study – leaving the discussion to discuss the key emergent findings and how they add depth to the existing literature. [just as an example, it is not clear what the statement on Ireland on p. 12 adds to the discussion of the Philippines]. The discussion would benefit from some tightening.

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
   Yes, the abstract is well written. A little more detail in the abstract as to the data analysis would be helpful. Perhaps the context of the WHO Code should be mentioned in the background.
7. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes, the writing is clear and concise

- Major Compulsory Revisions

More details about the data analysis would be appropriate, particularly whether the themes highlighted were emergent or identified a priori (i.e., were highlighted in the interview guide).

It would be best if the gender dimensions were highlighted throughout rather than just in the discussion.

- Minor Essential Revisions

The term on the top of page 8 is better described as brain circulation as opposed to brain drain circulation.

I’m not sure how ‘graphics’ the presentation of the findings are on page 10; I’m not sure this kind of descriptor is necessary.

The issue of JPEPA should be described in the findings – and not just introduced without description in the discussion. Page 13.

This is surely not the first time that leading Filipino organizations have been asked about the consequences of nurse migration; this sentence should be removed or revised significantly page 15.

- Discretionary Revisions

The Introduction could be tightened to focus primarily on the Philippines. It presently goes back and forth between the global context and the Philippines context without a clear connection of the former to the latter. For example, the Global Financial Crisis also had the impact of drying up jobs in ‘destination’ countries.

It is not clear why the education and health focus group data were presented separately rather than being integrated thematically as suggested in the introduction to the results. Indeed, there are a number of health issues raised by the education group and social issues by the health group.

A bit more description of the Bilateral Agreement issue would be helpful for a neophyte reader. What do such agreements contain/cover and why would they be of interest – pros and cons.

I think the issue of volunteerism could be more fully described and discussed, especially given its noted importance as the paper’s contribution to the literature in the Conclusion.

The Australian linkages could be more fully explicated in the findings, including its role as a signatory on the WHO Code (mentioned in passing in the
Conclusion).

The Conclusion could be shortened to make way for more text in the findings requested above.

**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'