Reviewer's report

Title: Can Discrete Choice Experiments inform HR policies in Developing Countries? A Review of their Application and Potential Contribution

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Reviewer: Mandy Ryan

Reviewer's report:

This paper looks at the role of DCEs in HR policies in developing countries, with a review of their application and contribution. Whilst this is clearly a very important area, I felt that the paper lacked something. The discussion of the DCE approach was not very informative, alluding to important issues but never really following them through. I guess this paper was not a discussion of the DCE methodology so maybe this is OK, though I do think the authors were a bit hard on the application of DCEs in Health Services Research. But this paper is really about the application of DCE to HR issues, other studies have reviewed DCEs. The paper really provides a list like presentation of the 11 studies in this area, I would like to see more discussion of them, with the implications for policy. Having finished reading the paper I am unclear what the key messages are; it seems to be a half way house between reviewing DCEs (which is not the intention) and reviewing their application to HR.

There is some discussion at the beginning of the paper re other studies that have addressed HR issues. It would be good to have more information on the methods employed here, and more discussion of how DCEs can take this literature forward.

And crucially a better discussion of the studies, and what they mean for policy and future research.

In conclusion, be clearer about what this paper contributes. There are a number of existing reviews of DCEs - it might be worth considering if there are particular issues that are likely to be important in developing countries and for their application to HR issues (where it might be argued individuals are used to making choices). If the paper is to discuss DCEs as a methodology this needs to be done more rigourously (rather than touching on the issues), and discuss more the applications of DCEs to HR issues.

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.