Reviewer's report

Title: Improving the implementation of health workforce policies through governance: a literature review

Version: 1 Date: 22 December 2010

Reviewer: James Buchan

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

The paper is well written, interesting and pushes into new territory in a relevant, if exploratory manner. The authors should give a little more space to the rationale for the way the approach was determined. Is it about identifying strategies for "improving" national governance in HRH in LMIC, as stated in intro, or is it about improving implementation of HRH policies through "better" governance, or both? Also, if focus is on national governance, why was the selection criteria explicitly targeted at case studies at district level- a bit more rationale would help the reader.

There is a big research literature on the use of "shared governance"- a well established approach used mainly at organisation level, mainly in nursing in USA, which is a method of involving staff in decision making- was it considered but rejected from the review because not LMIC? Suggest it would be worth a sentence or two in the intro and / or on page 9 where there is brief discussion of worker union participation. At same point- might be worth a reference to the growing body of work linked to "Positive Practice Environments" which is predicated on staff involvement in decision making

Also, there is mention of role of unions, but not sufficient about regulation and regulatory authorities for health professions which are often autonomous and clearly have a governance role- suggest some more on this (and perhaps on links to education providers who are autonomous and have separate governance structures that link in- accreditation of individual workers etc).

Minor Essential Revisions

some style points- font is small; correct use of referencing required; use of italics for some section heads is confusing ; abstract requires "Abstract" heading; need to break up/ re - write a couple of "denee " paragraphs to make content easier to read/ understand- first para page 6; third para , page 7; first para below "performance" on p 11; first lines on p11 need re-writing for clarity; re word phrase "being threatened" p7; typo " reform s" p5; p 10 not clear that "retired midwives" are a "new" cadre?
**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'