Author's response to reviews

Title: Editorial on Governance and Human Resources for Health

Authors:

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Author's response to reviews:

Cover letter with changes on:
Editorial on Governance and Human Resources for Health

Dear editors,

Please find below the reaction of the authors to the different reviewers’ comments. In the uploaded text we have included the changes, these are visible through “track changes”.

We look forward to your reaction

With kind regards,

Marjolein Dieleman

Referee 1:
Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and for including Liberia in this publication. I think the Editorial is overall quite good but could benefit from the following minor revisions:

Minor:
(1) Abstract: The word joined should be "joint"- done
(2) Abstract: The paragraph moves between past and present tense. I would revise to put all in present tense. Review the entire document for this- it happens in a few places, namely at the end of paragraph 7 under the Editorial- done
(3) Abstract: To match tense- strengthen should be "strengthening"- done
(4) Editorial: P3: "In this conference 181 people for 31 countries.." Change for to "from"- done
(5) Editorial: P3:" we used the following.." Change to "The following definition of.... was used.."
(6) Editorial: P5: Case should be plural, Visioning should be "vision", "A cross-cutting theme was ( not were)..."-done
(7) Overall: Review and insert missing commas and periods throughout -done

Discretionary:
(9) It would be nice in the editorial introduction to summarize briefly the main lessons from the six articles (e.g., The six articles here present important lessons on the necessary components of good governance for HRH: policy development and implementation, information management, devolution, organizational structure, management capacity, and management of external aid and funding...)

Reaction from the authors: We feel that the editorial briefly describes each article and that it includes the highlights/ main conclusions. Therefore in our view, it is not necessary to add an extra paragraph repeating the main conclusions.

Referee 2:
Reviewer's report:
Comments:
1) According to the authors the metaphor of the elephant in the room applies to the role of governance in the field of HRH. However I would like to invite the authors to consider the possibility of applying the metaphor in the following way. I think that the elephant is the Human Resources for Health and the room is the health system. In my view despite the efforts of international organizations to put on top of the agenda the HRH issue in most countries, HRH is still "the hot potatoe" and nobody wants to get to deep into re-engeneering its participation because of the political problems that this may create. Governance in such a case is the toolbox of possibilities that health systems have to make HRH (the elephant) behave according to desired objectives.

Reaction from the authors: We thank the reviewer for his idea, and it is quite true that little is being done in HRH because of its political dimension. However, in order to keep the editorial in the frame of the special issue- we have chosen to stress the importance of governance for HRH, to present some examples and to invite readers to document their experiences to improve it. This is the most important message of this editorial, and we feel this would be lost if we were to change the focus.

2) I think it would be recommendable to outline a little bit of the HRH Governance framework and try to show how the different article fit into this frame.

Reaction from the authors: We appreciate the suggestion to include the governance framework. However, we think it will be confusing for the readers, as in this editorial we explain governance in themes as defined during the conference- we prefer to keep it as it is, especially, because the framework that we developed, still needs to be tested.
Referee 3: Reviewer’s report

Major Compulsory Revisions
NONE

Minor Essential Revisions
1. Para 3. The authors refer to ‘six articles’. Only 5 papers are listed. Is the Editorial itself the sixth article? May be useful to present a short overview of the 6 articles and their focus. i.e. Decentralisation in the context of Brazil, emergency HR planning in the context of Liberia, HRIS from a regional perspective etc and how these relate to the five areas from the conference.

Reaction from the authors: There are 6 articles- and an overview has been at the end of the article, in the paragraph summarizing the 6 articles-added paragraphs:

“Six articles on governance in HRH are brought together for this issue; a review of published case studies on HRH and governance (Dieleman et al, 2011); a case study on HRH policy formulation and implementation in post-conflict Liberia (Varpilik et al, 2011); a commentary on opportunities for HRH policy in meeting population needs in a decentralised setting in Mali (Lodenstein and Dao, 2011); monitoring HRH and the use of a Human Resources Information Systems from a regional perspective (Nigenda et al, 2011); a case study on Human Resources Management in a decentralised context in Brazil (Pierantoni and Garcia, 2011) and measuring contributions of development partners to financing of HRH activities (Campbel et al, 2011)”

“The six articles published in this issue present a range of experiences with taking into account governance issues upfront in addressing the HRH crisis. The articles report partly on governance in relation to developing a joined vision, building adherence and strengthen accountability, and partly on governance with respect to planning, implementation, and monitoring. The articles cover elements related to two out of the five themes: “development of a vision and policies for HRH” and “aid effectiveness”. Other governance issues warrant attention as well. For instance, a number of case studies described in the review (Dieleman et al, 2011) highlighted that HRH policy formulation and implementation often lack transparency and suffer from corruption, and more insight into effective mechanisms and instruments for addressing these challenges is required. More attention also needs to be paid to documenting experiences covered by the themes “regulatory mechanisms, “participation and voice” and “governance in competency development in higher education for public health”.

2. Para 2. ‘the role of improving governance in solving the HRH crisis’. Could be read as a suggestion that governance will ‘solve’ the issue. May be better phrased as the ‘the role of governance in improving the HRH crisis’.

Reaction from the authors: we have replaced in 2 places in the editorial the word “solving” by “addressing”
3. The URL to the KIT conference (2010) and presentations should come earlier and be a reference rather than in the text.

Reaction from the authors: we have kept the section on the conference as the 4th paragraph, we have rephrased this paragraph and the conference proceedings are inserted in the reference list.

4. Para 5. May be better to read ‘political economy analysis’ rather than ‘studies’ so as to reference the commonly cited terminology of the tool- done

5. Para 9 – ‘in addition, more effective….’. Is the WHO study referred to part of the series (i.e. the 6th article) or a separate report that was not presented at the original Conference? It seems a little out of place with the other articles, yet is the only one cited as ‘forthcoming’.

Reaction from the authors: We have added this document as it strengthens the findings of the article on Brazil on HRH functions and difficulties faced when establishing HRH units. Therefore we prefer to keep it as it is.

6. Para 10. Would benefit from a sentence to describe the study after the sentence finishing ‘Campbell et al’. i.e. ‘In reviewing official development assistance to HRH through an analysis of UK government contributions’ or similar.- done

7. References. Inclusion and order to be tidied up. Would also benefit from full references to all 5/6 articles in the series.- done

Discretionary Revisions

NONE