Author’s response to reviews

Title: Institutional capacity for Health systems research in East and Central African Schools of Public Health: Experiences with a Capacity Assessment Tool

Authors:

Nasreen Jessani (njessani@jhsph.edu)
Daniela Lewy (dlewy@jhsph.edu)
Elizabeth Ekirapa-Kiracho (Ekky@musph.ac.ug)
Sara Bennett (sbennett@jhsph.edu)

Version: 4 Date: 13 March 2014

Author's response to reviews: see over
Response to reviewers Re: Institutional strengthening in health systems research: Experiences with a capacity assessment tool in seven East and Central African schools of public health

REVIEWER: DONALD COLE

Findings:
Title of table 3 "SPH's [add ASSESSMENT] results dissemination strategies".
"Institutional Capacity Assessment" added to the title

Results of the assessment versus outcomes of the assessment are still somewhat unclear to me as terms - can you give another go at clarification?

What we are trying to convey under the "findings section" is the findings relevant to the complexities of the Process itself given that there were 7 locations....We attempt to focus on the consequences of undertaking the capacity assessment exercise in different schools. We do not report on the results of the actual assessments but rather the outcomes of the process. Many of these outcomes are intangible as positive externalities (ie raised national profile of HSR). For this reason we have the three subheadings:

a) Findings: Implementation Process
b) Findings: Factors affecting the Capacity Assessment process
c) Findings: Outcomes of the Capacity Assessment exercise

In order to provide better pretext to the section, we have included a sentences to read "In this section we describe what transpired in each of the SPHs as a consequence of conducting the capacity assessment." We hope this provides more clarity?

We have also rephrased the subtitles to read:

a) Findings: Capacity Assessment Process
b) Findings: Factors affecting the Capacity Assessment process
c) Findings: Outcomes of the Capacity Assessment exercise

"Triangulation therefore allowed for perceptions to be RE-enforced or for misperceptions to be amended" not sure how one would enforce perceptions :-)
We have amended this to read "reinforced"

Discussion:
end of para 1 "However, in other cases (e.g. access to databases) the post assessment workshops served as a conduit for dialogue to reconcile different perceptions with objective reality." I am not sure how you can engage in such a process and still use the term "objective reality"! Seems very positivist for colleagues engaged in understanding institutional processes. I would suggest changing to "shared understandings" or something similar.

Noted. Amendment made.