Reviewer's report

Title: Conducting capacity assessments in African universities: implications for building the field of Health Policy and Systems Research and Analysis

Version: 1  Date: 10 July 2014

Reviewer: DAUDI SIMBA

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?
   Question not clearly stated. See comments.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?
   Yes

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?
   Not applicable

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
   Not applicable

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
   The conclusion needs revision. See attached comments

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
   There is no abstract.

7. Is the writing acceptable?
   Yes

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There is no abstract.
7. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes
- Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a
decision on publication can be reached)

GENERAL COMMENTS
The manuscript addresses an important topic in health systems and will
contribute to knowledge on capacity assessment and strengthening process. The
fact that this is a collaborative work across departments gives the manuscript
more credibility.

However, since the study involved Universities in African countries authors need
to limit their generalizability to within Africa. This is because of contextual
differences between Universities in the various continents.

Authors report the study was used by seven Universities in African countries.
However, the term University might reflect involvement of the whole University in
which the various colleges/schools/departments and disciplines were involved.
This doesn’t seem to be the case. Authors need to limit their inference to the
specific areas involved in the study.

The manuscript misses an abstract/summary. This is important in assisting
readers to decide on the whether to read the article or not.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS
Introduction
1st paragraph 3rd sentence from last ‘Yet debates … have little to offer the
unique needs of HPSR-A groups within Universities’ – This assumes the
existence of HPSR-A groups in African Universities. Authors need to give
evidence on existence of such groups in other Universities?
2nd paragraph last sentence starting with ‘While this is a gross simplification …
‘the sentence is long and unclear.
3rd paragraph, 7th sentence: “Capacity assessment still tend to focus on a single
level of capacity” Authors need to make references to those studies that focused
on a single level of capacity
- Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but
which the author can choose to ignore)

GENERAL
The results from capacity assessment have not been published. This leaves the
reader with no option but to assume that the outcome would be good since the
methods were good ‘the means justifies the end’. Authors need to convince
readers on the usefulness of the methods based on the quality of the outcome.

SPECIFIC

Introduction

3rd paragraph 1st sentence: “A plethora of frameworks exists ....” Authors repeat themselves on the paucity of information on capacity assessment. They already have expounded on this in 1st paragraph last but one sentence “Furthermore the pivotal contribution of capacity assessment ...”. If the repeated part has substantial information in addition to the first I would suggest that they combine the two parts.

3rd paragraph 6th sentence: ‘However it has been difficult to translate this theory ....' it has been difficult to translate this theory ...’ However authors refer to framework on the 1st and 3rd sentences. I wonder if the two mean the same.

- Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

The CHPSAA capacity assessment Methodology

3rd paragraph, bullet number 1, 2nd sentence: “This was done in order to … following consensus in the capacity development literature” with reference to capacity development literature – authors need to cite such literature

Pg 6, 1st paragraph 2nd from last sentence: typographical errors — ‘and in conduct a consortium-wide ..’

Pg 6, 1st paragraph last sentence: typographical error ‘... was conducted in separately but in parallel timeframe with ...’.

Pg 7; last paragraph 2nd sentence: typographical error ‘First, the CHEPSAA ... is a first for the field of HPSSR-A’

Pg 9, 2nd paragraph, 3rd sentence from last: ‘... may remain in the grey literature” (27, pg20)” —Authors should be consistent in making citations.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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