Reviewer's report

Title: Research workshop to research work: initial steps in establishing health research systems on Malaita, Solomon Islands

Version: 1 Date: 7 July 2010

Reviewer: Peter Westoby

Reviewer's report:

Firstly I would like to say to the authors - well done. I enjoyed reading the background to the workshop and the account of the workshop. Considering I am not familiar to either health systems research (and literature) and practice the story of practice was interesting. I particularly praise the collaborative efforts of several authors.

however,

Major Compulsory Revisions.

My main problem with the submitted article is threefold:

1. Firstly, it is overly descriptive and therefore lacks building an argument towards either new forms of practice or new theory. The section 'discussion' would be more accurately named 'description' - really the section is a description of what happened. Another section called 'discussion' then needs to follow this description arguing for new forms of practice or new theorizing around health research systems in a post-colonial context such as the Solomon's. The authors need to move from their specific story to some more generalising.

2. As per the comment in the abstract 'the workshop appears to have...' and the data discussion (p8) the authors need to clearly articulate the limits of their research. The evaluation data is presented without discussion about limits, ways of interpreting data etc.

3. Finally, the article, particularly in a new proposed discussion section and the conclusion needs to engage with more literature ensuring that there is an interplay between the empirical (the story of the work/evaluation data etc) and the theoretical - what does it mean to do this kind of work in the Pacific, and/or in post-colonial contexts? What does it mean for action-research thinking/theorzing?

2. A lack of engagement with the literature

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests