Reviewer's report

Title: Strengthening medical training programmes by focusing on professional transitions: a national bridging programme to prepare medical school graduates for their role as medical interns in Botswana

Version: 0 Date: 30 Apr 2017

Reviewer: Philip Cotton

Reviewer's report:

Thank you. The authors identify some principal challenges in training doctors in resource poor settings.

It is not clear what is already embedded in the local curriculum (one of the justifications is the mix of graduates from different places though the majority are locally trained) or what the dominant form of learning and teaching is. This will help to orient the reader - e.g. some regard PBL as preparing graduates better. There are occasional typos that can be picked up on editing such as 's' omitted from Botswana's but do not distract from message.

I was puzzled by the term 'Pre-Boarding' - is this North American?

Although the authors refer to practice in other places they do not apply themselves to the literature around 'preparing for professional life' - UK, Australia for instance...BMC Med Ed carries publications on this matter. In Scotland medical schools have moved final examinations to make room for much longer courses - one is for 9 weeks. What can you achieve in two weeks? There are examples of courses in which successful formative assessment becomes the ticket to graduation. There are examples of exercises in decision making and communication under pressure where students are given an on-call phone and repeatedly given tasks which they have to prioritise. The authors need to make these links. How did they decide the content of their course?

The authors need to write more on the self-assessment of preparedness. In what ways can graduates assess their own preparedness if they don't know what to expect or if they have one particular version of life as an intern? To what extent are they likely to rate the course as not being helpful? If we enrol them and tell them what is needed for successful work as an intern (which is pretty scary for some anyway) they are fairly likely to rate it as useful.

The term 'moderately enthusiastic' seems quaint and rather reserved but what does it mean?

The creation of community and the desire to drive quality are key aspects of this paper.
I am convinced that this course is an example of best practice but slightly more reflection on how this is practically implemented and assessed would be helpful. If this becomes formalised and someone fails to turn up, can they be excluded from taking up an internship? This of course is a big consideration in resource constrained places.

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If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**  
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Yes

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