Reviewer’s report

Title: Evaluation of the undergraduate Family Medicine programme of Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya: Quantitative and qualitative student feedback

Version: 0 Date: 18 Dec 2018

Reviewer: Alexander Chessman

Reviewer's report:

I applaud this investigation of learner feedback about a curriculum piece.

What is interesting about this manuscript is the comparison of quantitative to qualitative data sources for feedback. That comparison could be emphasized more clearly in this piece.

The general information about what the students did and didn't like isn't intrinsically interesting, because so much has already been published on creating optimal learning environments already.

But what would be most interesting is looking for subtle clues about underlying attitudes that were below the surface - for example, finding that students are concerned that they don't want to "trouble" the patients at the family practice settings is a fascinating revelation. Ideally, further qualitative investigation could be done to figure out more about that perception. What does it look like to a student, who feels that she may be troubling a patient? What subtle cues or clues would support this feeling? Is it that the student does not feel like her work with the patient ADDS anything to that patient's care? Is the learner causing the visit to last longer for that patient? Or making the patient tell the same history twice? The reason to investigate further is that, with greater knowledge about this perception, the rotation can be adjusted. Having the student present in front of the patient is one solution to this perception: http://www.stfm.org/FamilyMedicine/Vol49Issue2/Power97

I would have liked more highlighting of what little advice for improvement was given by the quantitative data - for example, what does a curriculum director do with 54% non-response on an item? Does the non-response on a quantitative item indicate lack of opinion? Negative opinion?

More description of the qualitative methodology would be helpful. What is the literature supporting the use of this round robin technique for collecting qualitative data? It sounds like a regular brainstorming technique - are you saying that nobody has published anything on this technique applied to student feedback? That would be interesting to know, and support the innovativeness of this work.

You do cite a similar study about using quantitative feedback from learners on clinical rotation. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5154156/ Yet you only cite this work in the manuscript in one place: "These
findings closely follow findings of similar studies done in undergraduate family medicine clinical teaching settings which emphasise that student prefer active and hands on learning styles."

I'm wondering whether their methodology, its description, and the way that the data are presented could be used as more of a model for your work. For example, in that article, the authors note "The number of comments on how important autonomy was for the students' learning experience was very large. The need to handle patients of their own became apparent in the students' comments from semester five and increased in the number of comments towards their graduation." Combining quantitative with qualitative data analysis can be helpful. If a small group of students passes around a piece of paper on which each person writes only a new idea... and then you look at the paper... you have no idea how many of the students agreed with this idea. Were the opinions widely held? Were the opinions strongly held? Is there any way to figure this out, given how you did the study?

Are the methods appropriate and well described? 
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

Does the work include the necessary controls? 
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown? 
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

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