Reviewer's report

Title: Posting and Transfer: key to restoring trust in government health services

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Reviewer: Gustavo Nigenda

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions:

a) I am puzzled about the type of document submitted. This seems to be more a commentary than an article and the instructions given to reviewers about how to carry out the assessment of any given document do not really apply.

b) The document summarizes issues that would deserve an expanded explanation to allow readers a deeper understanding of how the underlying mechanisms work.

c) Considering that this is a document emerged from a series of conversations of HRH experts about worldwide relevant issues, I can’t exactly see the “big new idea” under discussion.

d) Most of the considerations of the paper have been a subject of discussion and analysis for many years. Maybe authors intend to renew the nomenclature and provide new scopes but the majority of the issues have been part of traditional discussions in the HRH field.

e) It has been well documented the fact that HRH field is a political field where interests and power struggle are always present. Politics are inherent to HRH behavior and systems’ rationalization. And although we tend to focus on the political role of public organizations, workers are also political in nature. The role of unions and professional organizations frequently going against policy decisions to re-distribute personnel should not be missed.

f) “New” issues in HRH field could be corruption, and trust in institutions but not really new in the discussion of health systems performance.

g) Corruption is not only a characteristic of public health systems but of governments and even of societies as a whole. It has become in many LMIC a rule more than an exception. It is important to put this in perspective because solutions to this problem does not enterly rely in health systems operations but in broader social environments.

h) Restoring trust means that there was one day when populations trusted public organizations. I am afraid that this point is not so easy to prove worldwide. If we are going to reduce corruption and restore trust the issue does not only concentrate in health workers and authorities at local or regional level but in the whole public system.

i) In my opinion Posting and Transfer is a major challenge in the HRH field but some would argue that not necessarily the most important. Under this view, it
mainly refers to the possibility of carrying out efficient contracting and equitable geographical allocation of HRH but does not necessarily incorporate the notion of performance (productivity, malpractice, quality of care, etc.) which are still major challenges in many LMIC countries. Therefore, inviting analysts to concentrate in a specific topic could lead us to focus on the relevance of the trees while missing the relevance of understanding the forest as a whole.

j) Furthermore, the global scope on Posting and Transfer is not mainly about “commonalities” but about “determinants” as the recent Brazilian example to attract health personnel to rural areas has shown. The document does not seem to take this approach into consideration.

k) I would invite the authors to write a full-length paper

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**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'