Reviewer’s report

Title: The implication of the shortage of health workforce specialist on Universal Health Coverage in Kenya

Version: 1 Date: 07 Mar 2017

Reviewer: Belinda O'Sullivan

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for responding to the comments from reviewers. The paper is a little strengthened but not of a standard required for publication.

The material in this manuscript has the potential to be a good international publication, but it needs substantial reduction and reorganization for presentation to a scientific community and for the international reader.

It will help to view other papers about workforce published in HRH and maybe base your paper on how they present the contents according to introduction, methods, results, discussion, conclusion. Or it might help if you get some assistance from someone to support the scientific writing needed for this work to be published.

Introduction - This section requires a clear and specific background information on specialist workforce in Kenya. I suggest you can remove text that poses solutions in the introduction section. Rather, state why research on this specific topic is important, and the need for specialist health worker availability to support Kenya's service plan. There appear two issues that come up in different parts of the introduction: the Kenyan government needs more information so it knows what to target. And secondly there is an issue of health worker out-migration and within-country maldistribution (workers mainly based in cities).

The term "specialist health workers" needs to be defined clearly in the introduction.

A clear statement of objective is needed(avoid saying training needs assessment if possible; I think the thing studied is a "workforce needs assessment"). I suggest "This paper aimed to identify the availability of specialist health workers at county level against expected levels".

Methods could be outlined in briefer format, stating how the survey was prepared/validated, what you did (avoid stating limitations in methods, and try to avoid discussion of specific
counties which may not be relevant nor easy to interpret for international readers), state if the data collection staff were trained in using the tool, avoid calling staff "enumerators" which is not a well known term. State the analysis in brief "the results were described in quantitative form after categorizing open-text responses - but you need to state how you coded variables and the statistical tests done on any quantitative data. Be clear about the numbers of workers being compared within the table - perhaps something like: "we calculated the total of each type of worker by county and compared these with benchmarks that had been developed (from where)...."

Results - these need to be synthesized with reference to the aim of the paper, and strongly refer to the table presented. The international reader is basically interested in the key gaps you found, whether these were in particular types of health workers.

Discussion - Rather than providing more background, I suggest this section need to state straight away, whether Kenya is on track or needs particular attention to developing and recruiting more county-specialists. Suggest why the gaps found were the way they are. Stick the explaining only the results of this piece of work (you have not evaluated training to inform training pathways, you have only looked at workforce availability by county and specialty). Please then suggest clear options for improve the current situation (not just training, but is recruitment also relevant?) and whether there is any evidence to show these options might work. State other things gained from the process of conducting this project and any limitations.

Conclusion

Make sure the focus of attention is not just on training. What about recruitment and retention as well? Not sure you can conclude there needs to be a paradigm shift in the way workers are trained as this was not the subject of the paper.

I wish you luck with reorganizing the material, which I believe has potential to be of interest given the magnitude of the human resources issues faced in Sub-Saharan Africa.

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