Reviewer's report

Title: Approaches and impact of non-academic research capacity strengthening training models in sub-Saharan Africa: a systematic review

Version: 2
Date: 26 March 2015

Reviewer: Alan Boyd

Reviewer's report:

The authors have done a good job of responding to reviewer comments, and the paper is much improved as a result.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The use of the term "non-academic" training is potentially confusing and not fully made clear. As I understand it, the major distinction made between non-academic training and academic training is that it does not lead to a formal academic qualification (and as a consequence will tend to be shorter).

At some points, it is mentioned that non-academic training does not take place in academic settings (i.e. presumably not within higher education institution buildings), but I suspect that some of the training programmes (E.g. the ones involving visits to another country) did sometimes make use of HEI buildings. This could do with some clarification and

Many of the training programmes appear to be delivered by academic staff, so I think referring to them as "non-academic" is potentially confusing.

I am not sure what the best label would be. The search criteria refer to "not a formal programme", but this could be misleading. Possibly "training courses not leading to a formal academic qualification", or "non-HEI accredited training". "short courses" might be another possibility, but not all of the courses were short in terms of contact time.

I think the paper needs to include a bit more discussion around this, and a more explicit and fuller definition of the label that is used - whether a different label is used (as I would suggest), or "non-academic" is retained.

2. Regarding the insertion in the discussion "We focused on articles published in peer-reviewed journals as we believe such publications will ensure broader dissemination and possible replication of activities than grey literature alone", I don't think this is relevant to the methodological issue of the completeness/representativeness of the review coverage, so at the very least I think this should form the start of a new paragraph rather than following straight on from the previous sentence. I don't share the authors' confidence - there are lots of caveats - E.g. open access publication, the word limits that academic journals have, and the formal writing style, which may be a barrier - all of which are less problematic for grey literature publication. The main advantage is I think...
more permanent accessibility in future years (E.g. via a DOI). I would suggest deleting this sentence. I would also suggest inserting a sentence which considers the implications of the limitations of the review that have been identified (E.g. might there be systematic differences between programs published in the academic literature and those published in the grey literature only, such as being less successful, less "innovative", and having less academic input on the training side? etc.).

Minor Essential Revisions

"Trainings" doesn't scan well. I suggest changing this to "training programs" throughout.

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

**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