Reviewer’s report

Title: ASSESSING THE CAPACITY OF MINISTRIES OF HEALTH TO USE RESEARCH IN DECISION-MAKING: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND TOOL

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Reviewer: Mike Drummond

Reviewer's report:

Overall, I found this paper to be very well-written, interesting and relevant.

The methods used for developing the instrument seemed sound to me and I have no criticisms.

I did have a few comments about the scoring of the responses and the interpretation of results.

First, by adding the scores across all the items, am I right in thinking that all items are considered to have equal weight? If so, I wonder how realistic this is. For example, one interpretation of the results is that the items relating to organizational capabilities seem to have more influence than those relating to individual capabilities, to the extent that investing time and resources in improving the latter may not have much impact on the use of research unless attention is paid to the former. For example, Pakistan scores highly on individual capabilities, but because of its low score on organisational capabilities it comes almost bottom overall. If the authors agree, perhaps this point can be made a little stronger.

Secondly, I was not clear how the tool takes account of broader cultural influences on public decision-making. For example, in a country where autocratic decision-making is considered to be acceptable and where there is little demand for transparency and accountability in decision-making, one would not expect much use of research. Is this lack of consideration of these factors what is meant by the limitation that 'the conceptual framework does not explicitly take into account the the specific contextual factors that surround the MoH….etc.”?

However, both of these comments become less of a concern given the authors' view that 'the tool would be most useful if Ministries self-initiate the assessment as a way to generate productive discussions around capacity for research utilization, identifying areas for improvement and taking necessary steps to build capacity'. I think this is a wise suggestion.
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