

Author's response to reviews

Title: International flow of Zambian nurses

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Author's response to reviews:

Flow of Zambian Nurses

Naomi Hamada et al

Reponses to reviewer's comments:

The authors would like to thank the reviewers for their helpful feedback and insights which have strengthened this paper.

Reviewer 1: Nkowane

What is critical is to highlight a few policy recommendations on retention.- this we have done in conclusion.

Furthermore, qualitative information would have given a fuller picture. It may be essential to add such information to this article by way of selected interviews with policy makers including some nurses and regulatory bodies.

We acknowledge this point but feel as this is a commentary paper, and the length of the paper is short, we would prefer to keep to the quantitative data only and use the qualitative data in another paper which explores these issues in depth.

Reviewer 2: Fitzgerald

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. General comments.

The primary recommendation focuses on the written expression and organisation in all sections of the article. We have now tried to address these comments throughout the paper

The overall impression is the paper is that the discussion is disorganised. The specific purpose and aim are unclear without a route map for the reader to follow. The account is confusing with little or no signposting. We have now tried to address these comments throughout the paper with more signposting. We have re-focussed the aim of the paper, to examine the impact of policy on changes in the Zambian nursing workforce, including substantial changes in the migration patterns of Zambian nurses. We have re-organised some sections, created more subheadings to guide the reader and we have edited out the information about deaths in service and we hope have now sharpened the focus and the writing throughout.

Specific revisions suggested:

2. Abstract:

- Relative to the length of paper the abstract is long – We have edited the abstract, removing the paragraph on ethical recruitment. The abstract is now 232 words (down from 206)

- An immediate statement as to the type and purpose of the article would help.

(A commentary paper relating to the changing patterns of outward migration of Zambian nurses)- We have added a sentence at the end of the first paragraph in the introduction “Thus the aim of the paper is to examine the impact of policy on changes in the Zambian nursing workforce, including substantial changes in the migration patterns of Zambian nurses”.

- The aim of the commentary

(to discuss pattern changes in light of policy developments in Zambia and in receiving countries)- As above – have added “Thus the aim of the paper is to examine the impact of policy on changes in the Zambian nursing workforce, including substantial changes in the migration patterns of Zambian nurses”.

- The use of sending data

(method to identify three distinct periods where migration patterns change)- we have deleted this classification of three distinct periods as we did not have specific method for this classification.

- Influencing factors

(the extent to which policy influences migration patterns) We have now added more on this and hope it is now clearer.

- Closing sentence regarding conclusions and recommendations- This is included

in conclusion.

3. Introduction:

It is not clear where the introduction ends as there are no further sub headings until the conclusion (I initially thought the introduction ended at the end of first paragraph then decided it ended after second paragraph). We have now included more subheads and hope this aids the reader.

The relevance and benefit of using nurse doctor ratio data at the beginning of this section is unclear. This we have now removed

The comparison with US data at this point also seemed at odds with the rest of the article given much of the discussion uses UK policy to illustrate the issues at stake. This we have now removed

A clear statement of the issue would be more helpful. We have stated more clearly what we see as the issue and the focus of the paper.

This should identify the major sources of attrition; migration retirement and death (which is tagged onto the end of the discussion without any real context).- We have now focussed less on death attrition and retirement issues and clarified focus as stated above [the impact of policy on changes in the Zambian nursing workforce, including substantial changes in the migration patterns of Zambian nurses]

Aim should be specified and the issue at stake specified – i.e. the impact of policy on migration patterns. See above.

4. Discussion

Without any sub-headings the discussion was very confusing. Issues went back and forth throughout this section. We have re-organised the discussion and have added more subheadings for clarity and flow for reader.

It is recommended that the discussion is broken down into sub sections. In each case the migration pattern and policy context can be included. We have tried to address these points - but with word limitations and a desire not to completely rewrite the paper we have kept changes to a minimum but hope we have now achieved greater clarity. As reviewer one found it clear and easy to read we hope reviewer 2 will support a different style if clarity has now been achieved, which is our hope.

The section relating to the recruitment codes stood out from the rest of the discussion. It may be useful if the policies goals were more clearly specified. For example in the UK the role of HR policies to engage in active overseas

recruitment and the related immigration policies have different purpose (pull factors) to those that aim to limit and create an ethical approach to migration (to moderate the pull of the above policies). We have now added more about this and made a distinction.

Some issues are unexplained. This includes the significance of the Zambian voluntary separation package. Do nurses in Zambia retire, take the lump sum and use it to fund migration?- yes now addressed in abstract

Is this consistent with the age of people who migrate? Does the issue influence E/N and R/N migration? Not analysed. Beyond the scope of this paper.

Draw key points together before concluding. We have done this in conclusion.

5. Conclusion

New issues are introduced in the conclusion, in particular the Zambian Government's proposal to agree a limited quota with main destination countries- (also, the implications are not clear). – Done. We have removed this point from conclusion.

The commentary should also reflect on the opportunities mapping sending data offers in offering new insights into nurse migration- This is included in conclusion.

Minor Essential Revisions

6. page 11

The final sentence reads “the focus of the migration strategy” should be on how to retain a motivated workforce ...

Should this read?

“the focus of workforce management strategies” should be on how to retain a motivated workforce ... Yes - amended

Discretionary Revisions

7. Suggested revisions for abstract

- An immediate statement as to the type and purpose of the article would help.

(A commentary paper relating to the changing patterns of outward migration of Zambian nurses)- done

- The aim of the commentary

(to discuss pattern changes in light of policy developments in Zambia and in receiving countries)- done

- Influencing factors

(the extent to which policy influences migration patterns)- We feel this is now better addressed in the conclusions

- Closing sentence regarding conclusions and recommendations done in conclusion.

8. Suggested revisions for discussion subheading:

- a section that discusses the method of using outward data and the identification of different patterns- we have added a sentence re findings about this and feel this is sufficient in a commentary paper.
- a section that describes and discusses migration patterns and destinations prior to the recent high-income recruitment drive- see below
- a section that explores the middle phase – high income country- see below
- a section that follows a closing down of opportunities and a shift in the pattern- see below
- group differences – E/N & R/N see below

We have added 4 subheadings to the results and discussion section:

- Migration trends over time
- Sending country verifications: Registration with the UK NMC
- Ethical recruitment policies
- Second level or Enrolled Nurses

We feel this now better organises this section and helps the reader navigate the paper. We thank the reviewer for their suggestions.