

Reviewer's report

Title: Addressing the HR crisis: A case study of the Namibian health service

Version: 1 **Date:** 31 July 2006

Reviewer: Tim Martineau

Reviewer's report:

General

This paper addresses a familiar problem of the need to scale up staffing of health services and argues for a different approach from the norm.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. There is no clear description of what the aim of the study was. The article would be much easier to follow if this and the key study questions were articulated in the introductory sections. The study questions are implied in paras 1 and 2 on page 8, but need to be more explicit. The absence of aim and study questions makes it difficult to draw tight conclusions at the end of the article.

2. Results in the form of quotes included in introductory (e.g. on p7) and discussion sections should be included in the results section. The example of the parallel hiring scheme is significant enough to be included in the Results section.

3. More information on the methods is needed:

When was the data collected?

What were the reasons for selecting the 3 HR activities selected (employee selection, performance management and appraisal and training)?

What were the broad questions in the interviews?

4. In places it is unclear whether the strategic framework and strategies being discussed are specific to human resources, or cover wider health sector strategy including human resources. Examples: p19 (bottom), p20 para 3. This is important for the clarity of the paper as a whole.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

1. There are a number of references to 'we' e.g. in the conclusion (abstract) "We suggest that countries" and yet there is only one author. Using first person plural make sense when referring to the actual study "focus groups which we conducted .." (p7), but not in relation to the authorship.

2. p6 should read "trained outside the country or imported"

3. p7 add full stop after (horizontal integration)

4. p12 "the policy side" needs clarification

5. p12 who are the "local staff"? Are these district level and hospital managers?

6. p14 "more transparent than Malaysia's." Any supporting reference?

7. p18 enrolled nurses get trainee status, but what happens when they graduate?

8. p22 Para 1 "It may be relevant" - this is only of minor interest and for the sake of conciseness should be omitted.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1. p10 The sentence beginning "in the public management" and the subsequent sentence in brackets could be dropped and the point about not setting targets is sufficient.

2. p24 "there is in every African country." A reference would be helpful.

3. p24 "we conclude this article" sounds more appropriate

4. p32 "pre-medical training" is not really part of the structure. If it needs to be included it could be put in brackets.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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.