

Reviewer's report

Title: Intent to Migrate among Nursing Students in Uganda: Measures of the brain drain in the next generation of health professionals

Version: 1 **Date:** 2 October 2007

Reviewer: Delanyo Dovlo

Reviewer's report:

General

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

General comments:

The topic fits with issues currently being debated and discussed and does cover an area of interest to the journal. The writing however seemed unfocused and tries to use data collected, sometimes whether relevant or not and so was not clear what was being elicited and communicated. Sometimes the flow of arguments seemed a bit disjointed and the analysis a bit unclear. It might do better with a lot more work on how the results and discussion is organized. It will be good to have a clear theoretical framework around which the study is organized, where the factors used for assessing student intentions came from and how linked to previous work in this area..

Detailed comments:

Abstract:

Generally okay but the wording/language of the "results" bit should be clarified e.g "sense of profession and loyalty to country distinguished students wanting to work in rural/public or African countries compared to"

Background:

1st para: Actually in most countries, nurses have already been migrating for years the issue is often a recent rise in numbers linked with a rise in disease burden.

Para 2: feels slightly disjointed with a series of facts stated but not quite clear what it is trying to establish. Is it to say - "Nurses are important; and we know numbers are essential to achieve coverage, Africa has the highest shortage of nurses but also a disproportionately high BOD. Distribution between urban and rural is also a problem (but not only in Africa - in all countries). Will need to be stated much more clearly.

No such work done before? Indeed previous work has mainly been on medical

students - Mozambique, Uganda, South Africa though I will be surprised if nothing existed on nursing students elsewhere.

The Uganda country information should probably have come at the beginning of the section. I think the information gained can shape specific types of policy - on future planning of the workforce strategy and how to design a policy on recruitment into training school including selection and preparation of students.

METHODS:

There is no indication of the type of student nurses surveyed and seeing the average age - are they then certificate nurses upgrading to diploma? Are they enrolled nurses being upgraded? I doubt if 30 year olds are the main source of new recruitment into training (but I may be wrong).

Where was the FGD done only in Agha Khan and not Makerere - Public and private institution may have different ethos and different kinds of students. What are the features of the two institutions? Private? Public? Fee paying? This information will give some sense of context

It is not clear what was used to derive the factors examined - safety of country, finances, sense of profession etc (and not too clear what the last one means for example)

Questions as to destination - Africa is quite diverse and so it would have been good to see which type of country they were thinking of going to? Basically its like saying the intent was to go to "Europe" or "America" rather than UK or USA:

Results:

The sample seems to be of quite older nursing students

A lot is made of stability etc so some discussion of whatever the security situation in the country is in the background will be helpful

How many of this group were having a "free education"?

Students future work intentions

What is the comparison with existing nursing staff - e.g. in terms of likelihood to migrate? Is it different between students and working nurses? (e.g. using Nursing council verifications?)

Was the issue of preference for urban and public sector work elaborated on in the Focus groups? It might help to have more discussion on these.

Focus Groups:

Studies in Ghana (Buchan & Dovlo 2004), found the UK easier to enter (because no exams needed only an orientation period, similar nursing approaches) than the US so this is very interesting finding here.

It was not clear to me where a "disguised reason" was needed to get information on work permits, and the issue of fees/fraud of recruiting agents have been

documented and it will help if possible to learn more about Uganda's situation of the risks nurses have to take to be recruited.

Outlook on working conditions....(page 7)

What exactly was being assessed in "working situation"? It is interesting that so many (76%) would return to Uganda after working abroad is there any indication of what return is like currently? Did they elaborate any further in the FGD as to what will make them return?

The pay situation - see paper by M. Vujicic and others comparing pay.

Unemployed nurses working as barmaids - is there any hard evidence or data on the number of trained nurses not working in health? What do they mean when they say they are "exploited" by the PNFP sector?

A number of interesting issues here that are not quite explored to provide better knowledge and understanding e.g. Nurses exploited, or private practice demands, "rights not protected" and nurses blamed for doctors' mistakes - are there "stories" to back these? Lack of job protection - not quite clear what is meant here.

Profiling students on future intentions page 8/9

Rural based students insensitivity to stability or financial incentives - this sounds a bit strange - is it that urban students are unaware that the areas are actually safe? Are rural students simply ignorant of the financial gains in migration? But then rural students are "expected to experience depressions when working in Uganda"? if demographically rural students were older is the attitude a function of age and family links etc? What do older urban students think? The issue of being a role model in their communities seems a strong factor how does this compare with other situations?

Discussion:

The first paragraph which quotes the WHO AFRO study is comparing 2 different things - student nurses and actual general health workers not disaggregated! It will be good to find out other existing data for Ugandan nurses or other professions migration (e.g. verification records)

What exactly is this "expectation of depression" about? can any literature be sourced on this?(students from rural areas less likely to want UK and vice versa - this seems like rather irrelevant information?) page 12 para 3 talks of interactions between type of practice; intent to migrate; students personality???, and demographics - quite strange. Para 4: Why is there low intake from rural areas into schools or it was simply the self selection of urban respondents? This may influence policy decisions.

The conclusions are stated rather like an unconnected shopping list and are rather perfunctory

Other possible references - Prof. S Reid South Africa, and P. Ferrinho et al

(Mozambique) on rural medical students, M. Vujicic on wage differentials between African countries and destinations, a lot of work on push pull influences.

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

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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

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

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.