

Reviewer's report

Title: International flow of Zambian nurses

Version: 1 **Date:** 23 April 2009

Reviewer: jacqueline fitzgerald

Reviewer's report:

General comments

1. Does it address an important or timely issue?

The paper is timely and relevant to the continuing concerns regarding the global nursing workforce.

It identifies the common use of high income country data relating to the inward flow of nurses is used to capture the international flow of nurses.

This paper offers a different perspective by exploring the outward flow of nurses from Zambia in the context of Zambian national policy as a sending country and using UK data to illustrate the impact of policy shifts in receiving countries on nurse migration from Zambia.

It presents new findings regarding the changing migration patterns of Zambian nurses.

The paper draws some important conclusions regarding the degree of effectiveness of using national policy to control international nurse migration, suggesting the focus for effective management of the nursing workforce lies elsewhere

2. Is it well reasoned?

Despite the poor organization of the discussion, the article follows a logical line if inquiry. The sources of data used and its acquisition are identified. Patterns of Zambian nurse migration and registration with national nursing regulatory bodies are both described and represented in graph form.

3. Is it relatively balanced, or does it make plain where the author's opinions might not represent the field as a whole?

The paper is relatively balanced. The field is well represented by the literature and existing data selected to provide background and contrast to the data used in the discussion.

The discussion explores the internal nurse migration significance of relationship between changing patterns of outward migration of Zambian nurses and the changing policy context of both Zambia as a sending country and other receiving

countries. Specific differences are explored and the extent to which policies influence is also discussed. The discussion closes with reasonable and logical conclusions. The recommended focus for policy development is consistent with the findings of other writers in this particular field.

4. Is the standard of writing acceptable?

The standard of English is acceptable.

The organisation of the discussion is the main weakness of this article.

There are a number of major, minor and discretionary revisions outlined below.

Recommendations

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. General comments.

The primary recommendation focuses on the written expression and organisation in all sections of the article.

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.

Specific revisions include:

2. Abstract:

- Relative to the length of paper the abstract is long.
- 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)
- The aim of the commentary
(to discuss pattern changes in light of policy developments in Zambia and in receiving countries)
- The use of sending data
(method to identify three distinct periods where migration patterns change)
- Influencing factors
(the extent to which policy influences migration patterns)
- Closing sentence regarding conclusions and recommendations

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).

The relevance and benefit of using nurse doctor ration data at the beginning of this section is unclear.

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

A clear statement of the issue would be more helpful.

(For example, the Zambian health professional workforce is similar in its constitution to many other low-income countries in sub Saharan African. As the largest group delivering healthcare, workforce attrition seriously undermines the capacity of health systems to deliver services)

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).

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

4. Discussion

Without any sub-headings the discussion was very confusing. Issues went back and forth throughout this section.

The main reason appears to be the implicit focus of commentary being on post 2000 migration. The result is references to patterns prior to, and subsequent to this period are slotted in as points of reference. The discussion does not follow a coherent stream of inquiry but appears to wander rather aimlessly between the Zambian statistics, UK policy, and other destination countries, changes in migration to South Africa, between R/N and E/N migration and migration being more significant than death rates.

It is recommended that the discussion is broken down into sub sections. In each case the migration pattern and policy context can be included.

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)

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? Is this consistent with the age of people who migrate? Does the issue influence E/N and R/N migration?

Draw key points together before concluding.

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). This issue is linked to the effectiveness of the UK and Commonwealth policies to manage the migration process and should be discussed in the main section.

The commentary should also reflect on the opportunities mapping sending data offers in offering new insights into nurse migration

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 ...

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)
- The aim of the commentary
(to discuss pattern changes in light of policy developments in Zambia and in receiving countries)
- The use of sending data
(method to identify three distinct periods where migration patterns change)
- Influencing factors
(the extent to which policy influences migration patterns)
- Closing sentence regarding conclusions and recommendations

8. Suggested revisions for discussion subheading:

- a section that discusses the method of using outward data and the identification of different patterns
- a section that describes and discusses migration patterns and destinations prior

to the recent high-income recruitment drive

- a section that explores the middle phase – high income country
- a section that follows a closing down of opportunities and a shift in the pattern
- group differences – E/N & R/N.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests