Reviewer's report

Title: Cost and cost-effectiveness analyses of global HIV training programs

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Reviewer: Janet Myers

Reviewer's report:

While the paper is somewhat non-traditional (as you note, it does not contain real data or analysis), I agree with you that it does have merit. It reads to me more like a book chapter and should be revised to match a paper that one might see in a methods journal. I see this as a kind of “modeling” paper and it could work, but it needs significant revision, not only for style and format, but also for overall quality of the writing and editing, which could be improved.

Here are some specific comments:

The abstract, as currently written, does not reflect the actual results of the modeling exercise. What is currently in the “results” section belongs in the conclusion and the Results should reflect the findings of the modeling exercise.

Background: More citations are needed (for example, the first sentence). The language used throughout should be consistent – for example, is schooling the same as training?

Methods: The biggest critique I have of this paper is that the methods are not as well described as they should be considering this is a methods paper. The use of cost effectiveness terms (like “cost per unit of output”) without explanation to someone without cost experience, which seems to be the audience of this paper, makes it difficult to follow. The glossary is helpful, but a table with the terms and the examples used in the paper listed in columns would be better.

The use of published estimates of disease outcomes is underdescribed. This seems to be the most technical part of CEA analysis and deserves more attention.

It is also problematic that the methods are not systematically applied to the examples later in the section. The math is not explained in formulas in the text. The tables are helpful, but the analysis could be more thoroughly explained in the text.

Conclusion: Considering there seems to be a very nuanced interpretation of the results of the modeling exercise (that cost analysis can be misleading under certain circumstances), the conclusion is too short and does not treat the issue of whether or not cost analysis is a useful exercise in this and other contexts.

Overall, this manuscript presents an interesting ideas, but it has some serious weaknesses that should be addressed before it is published.