# Unit 2 -­‐ Session 2

**Planning the health workforce**

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Human resource policy development and planning are the foundation for successful health workforce development. Policy and planning are concerned with:

§ setting the framework and planning for the numbers, categories and knowledge, competencies and attitudes of personnel required both in the immediate and long-­‐term future;

§ the allocation of resources to train and pay these staff; and

§ the communication of this information to trainers and managers. In other words, ***health workforce planning*** seeks to ensure the:

§ *right* number of personnel;

§ in the *right* places (geographical distribution);

§ in the *right* combinations (skills mix);

§ at the *right* time (short-­‐ and long-­‐term planning);

§ with the *right* knowledge, skills and attitudes;

§ at the *right* price (budget and remuneration).

Policy and planning are often mentioned in one breath and, in fact, the literature frequently uses them to describe the same process. However, policy development and planning are two distinct, but closely related, processes.

“A national human resources for health policy is an expression of commitment to the HRH goals and a guide for action for health personnel. Such a policy describes the priorities that a country wants to achieve in the area of HRH as it responds to implementation of health priorities adopted by a country. It also identifies the main strategies for attaining those priorities. The policy also provides a framework within which human resource activities can be coordinated and implemented. Usually, the policy encompasses a country’s vision for short-­‐term, medium-­‐term and long-­‐term HRH development. The HRH policy should be within the context of, and consistent with, the overall national health policy” (Nyoni et al, 2006).

As indicated in the quote, policy development is largely located at national level, although some systems may provide leeway for limited policy development at provincial and even district level.

Human resource ***planning*** happens at all levels of the health system, although the content of this planning will differ substantially at various levels, and depends on the structure of the system. For example, while the national ministry may develop frameworks, oversee statutory bodies, interact with professional boards and tertiary institutions, HR planning at district level ensures the rational deployment of existing staff, the assessment of their training needs and so on.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES OF THIS SESSION

By the end of this session you should be able to:

§ explain and critique major HR planning methods.

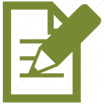
### READINGS

You will be referred to the following readings during of this session.

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| Details |
| Green, A. (1992). Ch 13 -­‐ Planning human resources. *An Introduction to Health Planning in Developing Countries, pp* 291-­‐315. Oxford: OUP. URL: **https://goo.gl/b7bT9x** |
| Nyoni, J. (2006). Policies and plans for human resources for health. Guidelines in the WHO African Region. Ch 3 and Annex 5. Brazzaville: WHO. https://ikamva.uwc.ac.za/x/jWST0t |
| WHO/GHWA (2008). *Ghana: Implementing a National Human Resources for Health Plan*.  [http://www.who.int/workforcealliance/knowledge/case\_studies/Ghana.pdf.](http://www.who.int/workforcealliance/knowledge/case_studies/Ghana.pdf) |
| WHO (2010). *Workloads Indicators of Staffing Need. User’s Manual. WHO: Geneva. url:* [*http://www.who.int/hrh/resources/WISN\_Eng\_UsersManual.pdf*](http://www.who.int/hrh/resources/WISN_Eng_UsersManual.pdf) *or* **(https://ikamva.uwc.ac.za/x/rqrVv0).** |
| WHO (2010). *Workloads Indicators of Staffing Need. Applying the WISN Method in Practice. WHO: Geneva. url:* [*http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/44415/1/9789241500203\_eng.pdf*](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/44415/1/9789241500203_eng.pdf) *or* **https://ikamva.uwc.ac.za/x/mmvHRW.** |

### UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITY OF HEALTH WORKFORCE PLANNING

Andrew Green’s chapter on ‘Planning human resources’ (in the reading list above) is an introductory text, which gives an overview of human resource planning. Green explains why, within health planning, human resource planning has shown a bad track record in the past. Furthermore, he introduces readers to the four main methods used in the planning of HR supplies. While some of the ground covered in this chapter, particularly the first part, is a repetition from the previous session, this won’t hurt. Consider it a bit of early revision.



### Activity 1: Challenges in HR Planning

**Answer the questions below, once you have read Green, A. (1992)**

* Green lists a range of reasons for the bad track record of HR planning, among them long lead supply times, professional attitudes, and a lack of

accurate data. These are largely reasons internal to the health system. Can you think of other reasons, both inside and outside the health system, that would contribute to poor HR planning? I am referring particularly to what you will have learned from your readings on health sector reform.

* Green explains that HR planning has essentially two components: supply of, and demand for, personnel -­‐ the aim being to establish equilibrium between the two. What are the factors that make the process of establishing this equilibrium so difficult and complex?
* Green presents the four planning methods most commonly used in HR planning. Which one would you favour if you were in charge of an HR planning process? Discuss your choice.
* Complete the exercise at the end of Green’s Chapter 13.

(To supplement this exercise you should also read Chapter 3 and Annex 5 of Nyoni et al.’s guidelines).

Now that you have an overview of some of the approaches used for health workforce planning, and engaged with some of the complexities of planning, I want you to look at one country’s particular and proactive approach to human resource planning.

### Activity 2: Reflect on Ghana’s HR planning experience

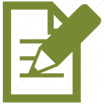
Please read the country case study *Ghana: Implementing a National Human Resources for Health Plan*. This sketches why and how the government of Ghana

developed a new health strategy (plan and human resource plan. It summarises the plan’s main targets and outlines major policy innovations in a number of HR areas.

Please think about the following questions:

* What was the rationale for developing a new health strategy for 2007-­‐11?
* What, in your view were the key policy decisions? Please explain why you consider these decisions important.
* How do you judge the strategy to expand education and training facilities? What are its advantages and disadvantages?
* What would you consider are some of the more promising employment and retention strategies to be -­‐ and why?

### Introducing a workforce planning tool



The chapter by Andrew Green introduced you to four different approaches to HR planning. In its endeavor to support countries’ planning efforts WHO has developed and supported the implementation of a planning tool, called the *Workloads Indicators of Staffing Needs* or ***WISN***. We won’t go into the tool in any detail in this module, but I thought it useful to introduce you to it and give you a taste, given that it is being used by ministries of health in many African countries.

The WISN tool uses a somewhat different approach to other planning methods: it establishes activity standards (i.e. how long specific tasks performed by health workers take) as a basis for then calculating health worker workloads.

You can find two documents about WISN on Ikamva: one is the user manual for the tool (https://ikamva.uwc.ac.za/x/rqrVv0); the other is a bokklet with case studies of WISN implementation in Indonesia, Uganda and Mozambique (https://ikamva.uwc.ac.za/x/mmvHRW).

### Activity 3 : WISN readings and discussion

Read chapters 1 and 2 (What is WISN and why this manual) of the User’s manual, as well as at least one of the case studies in the case study booklet.

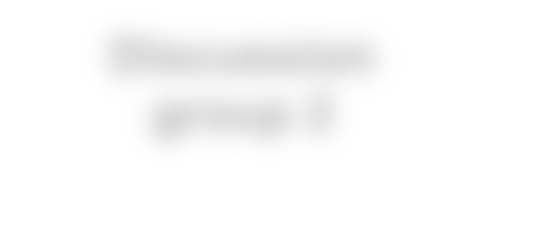
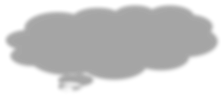
## Discussion group 2

Consider the feasibility and applicability of the method in your work context in light of what you read about the process and the lessons learned in the case studies. What do you think would be the opportunities and the challenges of implementing the method in your context?

Please share insights in the *Ikamva discussion* group and comment on at least one other student’s contribution.

### Please check the module diary under the *Course Outline* tab for the submission date.

1. **SESSION SUMMARY**



In this session we introduced four different planning methods and touched on how these methods may be used in different contexts. You also assessed one country’s approach to developing an HR plan.

The next session will focus on specific strategies – which are presently very important -­‐ to respond to the human resource crisis and to local needs.