Reviewer's report

Title: Country ownership and capacity building: The next buzzwords in health systems strengthening or a truly new approach to development?

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Reviewer: Helen Keleher

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions
None

Minor compulsory revisions
P 12 – indictors should be indicators
p 16 - Donor organizations should (to)

Discretionary revisions
The article presents a useful and timely review of capacity building in the development context, with a view to informing CB in health contexts. It reviews the literature to synthesize conceptual issues in CB work, to inform a definition of country-wide capacity building. The review is extensive and thoughtful. CB is certainly an important topic that is of wide interest to those involved in health development whether at the level of communities or country-wide.

In the community-based health sector in Australia, a commonly used definition of CB is:

An approach to the development of sustainable skills, organisational structures, resources and commitment to health improvement in health and other sectors, to prolong and multiply health gains many times over.


I appreciate that the authors have reviewed a wide range of literature for the paper and this is commendable in its thoroughness. That said, I feel that the section on defining capacity building may benefit from more structure about the components of CB. The document above puts forward a framework with core components of CB in health which are commonly regarded as:

1) Organisational development
2) Workforce development
3) Resource allocation
4) Leadership
5) Partnerships
These concepts are identified in the middle section of the your article but writing that section through a clearer framework would assist with the development of the final definition of country capacity building and make the content easier to follow.

I am also interested in the extent to which the authors consider sustainability to be important in the final definition. Sustainable change as a result of CB is of course, the desired outcome of CB efforts. There is reference in the Summary to aspects of ownership but I ask the authors to consider naming sustainability more clearly.

So again, I feel the framework and definition put forward would benefit from identifying the importance of sustainability and what that means – such as development of board members, assessing the strength of the partnership and working on partnership strengthening and so on, which are identified in the review.

**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.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests