Reviewer's report

Title: Applying the Workload Indicators of Staffing Need (WISN) Method in Namibia: Challenges and Implications for Human Resources for Health Policy

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Reviewer: Jean Dr Robson

Reviewer's report:

I would consider that this article falls under the 'methodology' category of HRH articles for publication rather than be considered as a research contribution, although the application of the WISN technique is both significant and original in this particular regional and national context.

The introductory section is succinct and clear and clearly presents the rationale and purpose of the technical intervention - the introduction of WISN nationally to establish new staffing norms, and to identify the particular imbalances in the workforce and skill mix.

Discretionary revisions

The section on 'Application of WISN in Namibia' which specifically reviews the process adopted, is helpful, although slightly more detail regarding the size and membership of the WISN task force, while recognised as being contextually specific and relevant to Namibia, could be valuable for practitioners/planners considering adopting this approach.

The same comment applies to the paragraph on the Kavongo regional pilot. It would appear that this stage was critical to the success of the intervention, but would benefit from additional detail and consideration of the value of this stage to the overall success of the exercise.

Paragraph relating to the field verification of data is significant and important in the methodology, but again is offered without much detail or commentary on the value of this step.

Data collection etc. paragraph mentions Table 1 referring to service standards for nurses in health centres and clinics. It is suggested the author checks whether the standards for 'conducting a daily ward round' and 'routine nursing care' in the table are correct prior to publication as this could give rise to some correspondence later. It is too late to adjust these standards, but it might help to clarify these two standards in a footnote?

Text box, last para, last sentence. is unclear and I would suggest rephrasing "....this third set of individuals" to be more clear that this refers to expert working groups.

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 I have no competing interests.