Reviewer's report

Title: Human Resources for Health and decentralization policy in the Brazilian Health

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Reviewer: Gilles Dussault

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This case study is of interest to readers of HRH because of the uniqueness and amplitude of the Brazilian experience in strengthening and developing its health workforce and in improving its geographical distribution.

Corrections, minor but essential, and which authors can be trusted to make, are needed as follows:

Add an introduction which introduces the issue (“HRH management in a process of decentralization”) and describes the objectives and structure of the paper. In the submitted paper, the reader has to wait until page 7 to get that information.

p. 3, l. 8: replace “currently” by the exact year of reference

Table 1: are more recent figures available?

p.4: second paragraph needs to be rewritten as it is difficult to understand in its present format (divide in 2 sentences)

par. 3: “Both reforms.. “, which reforms?

p.5, par.2 “ According to Fleury ..” : difficult to follow and does not add to the argument.

P.6, par.3, l.3: “… it worsened chronic problems …” needs to be explained.

p. 7, par. 1: The first one is the federal centralization that made a decentralization policy possible, in which the federal administration has the protagonism in defining (Suggestion: the authority to define) standards, financial incentives and other tools of national induction (WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?).

Par. 2: the behaviour of policy makers and health managers is pretty conservative. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Methods: Suggestion : replace first sentence by: We used a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods to better capture all dimensions of this issue [10]

P. 8: The a. mention workshops (HOW MANY, HOW MANY PARTICIPANTS OF EACH CATEGORY?) and a questionnaire (WAS I USED DURING WORKSHOPS?)

PAR. 4 : …253 HRH managers of state health departments and large cities: how many departments, how many states, how many cities represented?

P.10: Existence of a HRH Unit. Suggestion: “76.3% of the 253 Health Departments surveyed have Human Resources for Health unit of some kind.
Most of them followed the federal model (SGTES), covering the areas of health labour and health education management.

Table 2 is not needed. Table 3 becomes table 2.

P.11, par.3 l.1: replace “jobs” by “number of positions”

Par. 4; “It was observed that 42% of managers are not aware of this program although 23% of them participate in solving problems of health workers recruitment”: not clear.

P.14: What is “low-skilled managerial technique …”? A Discussion of the Brazilian experience in the light of comparable efforts to decentralize the management of health services would add strength to the conclusion.

The text needs to language corrections.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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