Author’s response to reviews

Title: Continuity and Change in HRH Policies: Lessons from Brazil

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear editor,

Thank you for providing feedback from the reviewers- please see below for detailed response on how each point has been considered / addressed.

Reviewer 1
Discritionary revision - If the focus is the SUS, some adjustment might be necessary - pg 1 - Introduction, third paragraph, fifty line, it seems to me two decades and not three (2011 - 1988), re -phrased as “across three decades”, (meaning 80’s, 90’s and 2000’s)

conclusion , first page , first paragraph, seventh line, it seems to me that is not thrity years or more, even when you are recovering policies before the SUS.
Rephrased as “this long time period”

Reviewer 2
Major Compulsory Revisions
1. under the background, it would be important to mention clearly what was achieved so far in terms of HRH. It was a bit vague

More clarity on emphasis of achievement of staffing growth and “scaling up”; and on multi- department/ stakeholder approach; references added.

2. In Table 1, doesn’t reforma sanitaria translate into health reform? Could this have prevented the authors from finding additional articles related to the search topic on non-local websites/databases? Given that the search as primarily conducted in Portuguese, it might be interesting for the authors to comment on whether language was a barrier in identifying material for their topic. There are
many relevant articles in English. What about grey literature and commissioned work. This could be also a valuable source of data in terms of process and progress. Grey literature is critical in that sense

Clarification added about focus on Portuguese language work, and on the point that there is very little written on Brazil experience on HRH in English- thus the rationale for focusing on Portuguese language publication. Point about grey literature now covered.

3. More clarity is needed in how stakeholders were identified and how the authors ensured that they talked to the right mix of stakeholders. Also, in the results section, it is not clear which results come from stakeholder interviews and which ones come from literature review and documentary analysis

Additional information added about process of identifying commentators. Results section modified to clarify that the results are a synthesis of findings.

4- A better description is needed in terms of analysis methods used

Methods section has been expanded and re written to give more information and detail

5- in the results section, under staffing growth, some references need to be made if the results came from a reference, unless it is the outcome of interviews and this should be stated

Clarification provided about which aspects of results were from data and which from other sources.

6- I see the issue about expanding the role (i.e. scope of practice) for certain health professionals is interesting and relevant to other contexts and it would be important to have more reflection on this in terms of process, challenges, etc

Further detail on scope of practice/ role development and challenges added in results and lessons from evidence base flagged in discussion sections

7- The results section need to be better structured

Restructuring- discussion section has been reduced in size and more content is now in the results section- as per suggestion in 11

8- The overall message that staffing growth was not the result of any one policy is important and very interesting. I believe authors could refer to some relevant literature in health policy analysis and they might find some interesting material there to help support their findings
Additional references added from other countries, as support, in discussion section

9- In terms of HRH management section, the findings on the capacity of MOH are critical and important.

No action

10- While staffing and management are integral components for the success of HRH strategies, should there be more room for discussion on issues such as education, production, credentialing, etc.? Where is Brazil on these issues and what can we learn from its experience if applicable? And how do they fit within country priorities?

These are relevant questions for a broader based paper but were not addressed in detail- however this point has now been added in to limitations/ further work, section, and references added.

11- In terms of the discussion section, I felt that many of its sections can in fact come under the results section. Some paragraphs are in fact an outcome of the work done rather than further analysis of findings. I think the discussion section would be strengthened also if it places results in a broader international context and identifies policy implications that follow from results as well as lessons for other countries. Also, a new line of inquiry in HRH research can stem from this paper and would encourage future research in HRH policy analysis and implementation research

As per 7 and 8 above, have added references and situation report from other countries to discussion section; other content from discussion section has been moved and re located within the results section to give a more precise break between the two sections.

12- it is important also to acknowledge and discuss limitations

Limitations now discussed

- Minor Essential Revisions

1. The abstract was not part of the manuscript file provided online.
Abstract was/ is submitted

2. Under the Staffing Growth section, there is a missing reference in Paragraph 3
Not clear...in any case text has been changed in this revision