Reviewer's report

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

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Reviewer: Fadi El-Jardali

Reviewer's report:

This is a very interesting paper that addresses the process and progress made in implementing HRH policies in Brazil. Limited work exists in HRH literature that actually documents and reports on the process and progress. The paper also clearly situates HRH within the broader health system and acknowledges the needs for a systems thinking approach in addressing HRH challenges. The paper documents, in a retrospective type of analysis, the evolution and the process of implementation.

- 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

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

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

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

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

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

7- The results section need to be better structured

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

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

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?

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.

12- it is important also to acknowledge and discuss limitations

- Minor Essential Revisions
  1. The abstract was not part of the manuscript file provided online.
  2. Under the Staffing Growth section, there is a missing reference in Paragraph 3.

- Discretionary Revisions
  None

**Level of interest:** An article of outstanding merit and interest 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