Reviewer's report

Title: Implementation of the HealthKick intervention in primary schools in low-income settings in the Western Cape Province, South Africa

Version: 1 Date: 26 April 2015

Reviewer: Emanuel Salvador

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
Response: Yes.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
Response: Yes

3. Are the data sound?
Response: Yes

4. Do the figures appear to be genuine, i.e. without evidence of manipulation?
Response: Yes

5. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
Response: Yes

6. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

7. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?

8. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?

9. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
Response: No.
Implementation of the HealthKick intervention in primary schools in low-income settings in the Western Cape Province, South Africa
It is necessary to add an expression “process evaluation” in title.

10. Is the writing acceptable?
Response: Yes

Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)

The sentence of line 91 is redundant. “These principals identified the top health priorities in learners, parents and educators.”
Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Key words
I suggest the following keywords: School Health Services, schools, Child Nutrition Sciences, motor activity and Social Planning (Mesh terms-pubmed).

In sentence of line 124, is necessary to concept Xhosa Population, because the Public Health Journal is an International periodic.

Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

The Sentence on line 127 says that the selected schools were receptive to intervention. What is the criteria to define it? One of the study’s conclusions is that schools should be more involved in the interventions. It isn’t an inconsistent conclusion, considering that the participating school had as a criterion support the intervention?

The participant’s perceptions about physical activity were getting worse by the intervention. I wonder if this occurred because they had more critical evaluation or if there was a worst objective evaluation.

My major concern about this paper is related to the purpose of the study and the result described by the authors. The study seek to evaluate the process (interventions in quality and quantity) or outcome (if participants did more physical activity, fed better)? From the text content, it is clear that is about the first alternative, but this conclusion that "the program was not effective" would be more appropriate if the outcome was the main goal. How to ensure that participants would change their habits only with all the initiatives undertaken? I wonder if what has been achieved was not enough to change the AF levels, nutritional status and perception of spaces available to eating healthy food and to the practice of PA?

In addition, there is always a question about the form of intervention: more prescriptive, objective or more critical, built by the interaction of the research participants, but less objective. Although it has been discussed, it seems necessary to examine more the subject. Do prescriptive interventions can lead to quick results, but with low grip in the long term? Interventions more critical, built by the participants, may not have effective results in the short term but do they reach results that are more permanent in the long term?

No limitation was mentioned, however, it is unclear whether the evaluators and interviewers actively participated in the study interventions. It would not be limited to the same people who plan interventions with the participants are the evaluators?

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'