Reviewer’s report

Title: The evolution of the National Licensing System of Health Care Professionals: A qualitative descriptive case study in Laos

Version: 1 Date: 13 Nov 2016

Reviewer: Sharon Brownie

Reviewer's report:

Opening Remarks

This study addresses an important topic of interest; however, deficits in the research methods and reporting render it not ready for publication at this time. The following are a small sample of areas which would need to be addressed before it is publication ready.

Re Key Words

For future reference and to increase citations of published work, it is recommended that key words are drawn from the formal listings in a global library indexing system such as the MeSH Browser https://www.nlm.nih.gov/mesh/MBrowser.html. The MeSH browser includes key words such as: Policy making; Policy development; Nursing; Manpower; Licensure; Loas

Re Methods

The outline of methods in lines 23-35 of page 5 does not contain sufficient information to reassure the reader re the quality and rigor of the research process. Critical information pertaining to the initial research question/s, the type and number of interviews, description, profile and number of participants is missing. Stakeholder interview data is not adequately reported. It is recommended that authors refer to publications related to Qualitative Case Study Methodologies and the COREQ Consolidated Criteria for reporting Qualitative Research before resubmitting this work for publication.


Re Ethical Clearance

Data collection includes interviews with key stakeholders; however, no ethical clearance was obtained and is noted as non-essential (see lines 35-41 page 11). This study goes beyond document review alone; it is noted as qualitative case study including stakeholder interviews. Appropriate publication standards require ethics clearance for all research involving human participants.

Level of interest
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests
I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal