Reviewer’s report

Title: Health workforce development and retention in Guinea: a policy analysis post-Ebola

Version: 0 Date: 08 Mar 2019

Reviewer: Tim Martineau

Reviewer's report:

This study sets out to advance the academic debate on how to strengthen the health workforce for resilient health systems in fragile contexts through a situation analysis two years after the Ebola outbreak. The intended focus of the analysis appears (see below) to be on the distribution and retention of staff (objective #2) and the match between training output and demand (objective #3).

Background

The research objectives need clarification and to be more clearly linked to a workforce framework to provide focus for this study.

Methodology

The way the policy triangle is used and whether the focus is on the development or implementation of policy should be clarified.

Explain how the methods used addressed the study objectives. How, for example, were retention rates calculated?

Explain how ethical approval was obtained

Explain how were respondents selected

Provide more information on the study sites (eg. what were the very different rural contexts?)

Summarise the content of the interview topic guide and the relationship to the research objectives.
Results

The structure of the section needs to be explained with regard to the conceptual framework and research objectives.

Quotations need to be integrated into the main text as it is difficult to make the connections (and therefore probably reduced due to word count).

The narrative is difficult to follow as reported facts are mixed in with opinions of respondents without clear linkages.

The data on policy content is mostly based on wishes of the respondents rather than actual content.

The Walt and Gilson model refers to the development of policy as "policy process", whereas the reporting under this heading refers to policy implementation.

The analysis of actor in the Walt and Gilson policy triangle relates to: "actors, their position in power structures, their own values and expectations". This is not what is described in this section of the results.

The information on training outputs makes no link to demand in order to support research objective #3.

Discussion

The Walt and Gilson model continues to be misused in this section.

New data is added into the discussion eg on work location of females.

The two recommendations fail to adequately address the aim of the study.

Conclusion

This is not adequately supported by the findings and discussion and there is no clear link to the title.

Detailed comments:

P4 l8 use 'policy window' as in Figure 1
P7 l14 define shortage (against sanctioned posts or absolute)
P7 l17-18 clarify whether this relates to absenteeism or vacancy
P8 l1 how is the finding that "this cadre hopes so to be prioritised …" derived from the methods
P8 l3 Which participants?
P8 l12-14 more detailed linked to the table, included differences between civil servants and contract staff and volunteers is needed.
P8 l16 provide evidence for statement about ageing.
P12 l7-9 It is not possible to see Lower Guinea on the map

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

An article of limited interest

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