Reviewer’s report

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

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Reviewer: Kim Ozano

Reviewer's report:

The data in the paper is valuable and well written at times, however the methods section is weak and difficult to understand, especially in relation to quantitative methods. In addition referencing is lacking throughout. The results and discussion section need revisiting and connecting better.

Abstract

The methods in the abstract lacks detail. I suggest adding how many interviews and some characteristics.

Results in abstracts could be more concise. It is not clear why intersectoral working would anticipate policy issues, wouldn't they rather review policy or re-design? I think it needs revisiting.

Background

Lines 14-16 need references.

Line 16 - variations between urban and rural in which way? Also needs a reference

Methods

The methodology section is week, it is not clear what 'form' was used to collect quantitative data and references are required throughout. Also the analysis and ethics process lacks detail.

* Lines 2-4 in the methodology section need a reference - check ref 20

* The following line is still quite vague, what did the visit entail and what methods were used to gain the overview? The seven administrative regions of the country, each with a health professions 14 school, were visited for an overview of the health personnel trained in the
educational centers during the last 5 years, as well as to assess whether these educational institutions are functioning in the post Ebola period.

* It is clear that interviews were conducted but lacks demographics of participants, gender, age, experience and where were they from, 56 were conducted but the reader needs to know more about why they were selected and how. A table showing who and where the interviewees were from would be useful.

* Page 6 line 21 and 22 - What type of analysis was conducted, very unclear 'An analysis was conducted to determine the professional graduate trends by year and type of personnel.'

* On page 6 the analysis section lacks detail and references. Lacking ethics detail, were interview participants provided with information sheets, the chance to ask questions and was signed consent gained?

* Discuss why the study only chose rural areas and why those two areas in particular.

Results

Overall the results section has valuable information and at times is written well but the tables of quotes were hard to follow in relation to the narrative. The use of boxes in the results section for quotes disconnects the data from the summaries. I suggest adding the quotes where they belong in the narrative of the results for ease of understanding and flow. Word count maybe an issue but some words could be cut from the background so that the data has more space. Other points are:

* On page 7, the first paragraph says there is a shortage of staff but a shortage in relation to what specifically, global recommendations, local policy?

* The last paragraph on page 7 speaks about retention but in relation to being 'present' at the post or not. It is not clear how you knew this, was it a visit, could the staff have simply not been at the health facility that day. The lack of detail in the methods and a lack of detail as to how you assessed retention rates makes the results confusing for the reader.

* Lines 1-2 on page 8 need evidence from the data, quotes for example.

* Ministry of Health should be capitalised throughout.

* There is a description of quantitative methods in the results section, this needs pulling out and better describing in the methods section.
Discussion

The discussion has some good points but at times blurs between results and discussion. References to wider literature is lacking which could strengthen some of the points. Consider being more concise and clear of what is results and what is discussion. Also, some subjective accounts that lack evidence weaken the arguments. Other points:

* Page 14 - lines 19,20 and 21 require references

* Page 15 line 10,11 and 12 indicate that HWs might feel replaced, this is an assumption and if there is evidence it would need to be in the results section.

* Page 18 line 3 'Some countries have developed an observatory to monitor HRH trends.' This is a good opportunity to link with literature, state which countries and how.

* Linking the recommendations on page 17 to literature would strengthen these, where has this been done elsewhere and what was the outcomes?

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