**Reviewer's report**

**Title:** Designing evaluation studies to optimally inform policy: what factors do policymakers in China consider when making resource allocation decisions on healthcare worker training programs?

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**Reviewer:** Arkalgud Ramaprasad

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Broadly, the paper addresses the issue of translating program evaluation to policy by the policymakers. It is focused narrowly on (a) healthcare worker training programs, (b) resource allocation decisions, and (c) informing the policymakers for the decisions, and not the ultimate policymaking or policy. The study is conducted in China with a small group of local policymakers. Its results extend and expand the Kirkpatrick model.

The paper is insightful. The method is thorough. To be able to generalize their findings, and fulfil the expectations raised by the first part of the paper's title, I would suggest the following: (a) frame the paper within a broader model of translation of program evaluation to policy, and (b) reorganize the final model slightly. I will explain the two below.

The current paper is more an extension of the Kirkpatrick model and less of "[d]esigning evaluation studies to optimally inform [and formulate] policy." The latter is the desired outcome. By framing the study within a general model for translating program evaluation to policy, it would be easier to generalize the findings of the study beyond (a) healthcare worker training programs, (b) China, and (c) resource allocation decisions.

The authors present their final result as an extension of the Kirkpatrick model (with the added broader programmatic results), and expansion with two other components -- broader implementation considerations, and perceived reliability of the results. To this reviewer, the final model may be summarized as Kirkpatrick model focused on the specific program elements
broader programmatic results would be part of the broader programmatic component. The broader programmatic component would contextualize the results of the specific program component. The evaluation credibility could amplify or attenuate the willingness to formulate policy based on the program evaluation information.

In short, the message of the paper and the general underlying model appears to be:
Translation of program evaluation to policy = f(program evaluation, program contextualization, evaluation credibility). The Kirkpatrick model focuses primarily in the first component, the authors have added two other components to it.

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