Reviewer’s report

Title: The place of learning in a UHC health policy process: the case of the RAMED policy in Morocco

Version: 0 Date: 08 Jan 2019

Reviewer: Olushayo Oluo

Reviewer's report:

General

The manuscript discusses learning during a Universal Health Coverage (UHC) policy development, implementation and evaluation phases. This topic is important in view of the current global drive to achieve UHC which is the main target of the SDG 3. The authors have deployed what looks like a scientifically sound qualitative method for the study which resulted in rich findings however, the manuscript (especially the results section) is far too long which makes it difficult to understand.

Specific (and essential) comments which the authors should review and address are highlighted below.

Specific comments

Introduction

The authors have used sufficient evidence (literature) to outline the key issues around UHC process and learning. However, this section could be better organized and abridged as follow:

Paragraph 1: What is known about the topic of the manuscript?

- Definition of UHC and description of its main elements namely service delivery, quality of care and health financing.
- Definition of learning in the context of this paper and why learning is critical in UHC policy development?
- Description of the nexus between UHC and organizational learning

Paragraph 2: What is unknown (gaps in information) about learning in UHC (particularly public health financing) that this study seeks to address?

Paragraph 3: What are the goals, objectives and research question/hypothesis for this study?
Methods

The section on conceptual framework which runs from line 57 of page 4 to line 49 of page 6 is redundant and should be deleted or significantly abridged. Since the Garvin framework is a recognized scientific method, there is no need for the authors to elaborately justify why they used that method. A brief description of the Garvin framework could be included in this section (with the appropriate reference) or as a supplementary file to reduce the text.

A brief section on the study context which describes the health and public health financing context of Morocco and the RAMED programme would be helpful for readers to better contextualize and understand the paper.

Line 4 to 27 of page 7: the authors have said that they organized the documentation of the RAMED policy process into 5 questions but only 4 questions were listed; could you please clarify?

Page 7 line 30 to 44: how did you identify the documents? Through online search? If yes, please mention the search engine and the search terms used.

Page 7 line 50 to 53: please mention the sampling method used for selection of the interviewees.

Results

This section requires significant review. I find it too long and not very easy to read! Although a qualitative research methodology was used, I believe that the authors could better use tables and other means to summarize their findings to make for easier reading and understanding. For instance there is several repetition of information in the various sections on limitations to learning (for example the hierarchical limitations of learning in Morocco), could the limitations be grouped into one section and the results combined?

Table 1: the selection of interviewees is biased towards the policy implementation phase of the study; could this be a potential source of bias for your study? What guided this number of interviewees; could three interviews have resulted in saturation of information?

The use of more concrete examples to back up some of the findings and issues raised in the result section would further validate the findings of the study.

Discussion

The first 2 paragraphs of this section (line 55 of page 33 to line 15 of page 24) are repetitions and should be deleted. The authors should focus on summarising and rationalizing their findings and should refrain from repeating the objectives and methods of their study.
I would therefore suggest the following structure for the discussion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph 1: summary of the main findings (current line 18 to 38 of page 24)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph 2 to 4: in-depth discussion of the main findings describing the significance of these findings, how they compare with the findings of similar studies and how they would improve or hamper learning during UHC policy development, implementation and evaluation process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph 5: study limitation and how this was mitigated (current line 20 to 34 of page 29). Could recall bias be a limitation in view of the long period of time covered by the study? If yes, please elaborate and provide mitigation measures that were taken.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

This section has all the required elements and is very well written. However, the structure could be better organized as follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph 1: recap of the aims and objectives of this study and whether the findings have addressed the objectives (current line 3 to 17 of page 30)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph 2: the authors need to make the recommendations of the study clearer and stronger; what should be done in practical terms to address the findings of this study? How, when who should implement the recommendations?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Level of interest

Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English

Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable
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