Reviewer’s report

**Title:** Evidence-informed policy formulation and implementation: Comparative case study of two national policies for improving health and social care in Sweden

**Version:** 1

**Date:** 18 March 2015

**Reviewer:** Annette Boaz

**Reviewer’s report:**

Major compulsory revisions

1. Much of the paper is descriptive rather than analytical. This would need to be addressed in developing the paper for an academic journal.

2. There are quite a lot of unsubstantiated statements throughout which need attention:
   - e.g. These policies represent typical Swedish policy cases (p9)
   - The government was exceptionally active in promoting the policy (p18)
   - SALAR's combined role… implied unique possibilities to create pressure’ (p19)

3. Somewhere the authors need to acknowledge and draw upon the raft of policy implementation literature. While I agree that this hasn’t been used much in evidence informed policy studies, it has been brought to the attention of researchers in the field (see for example, the paper by Nilsen et al 2013 in Implementation Science: http://www.implementationscience.com/content/8/1/63). There is much, for example, in the paper that would relate to the work of Sabatier and colleagues on advocacy coalition frameworks.

4. The choice of models doesn’t seem very helpful in terms of explanatory power (as the authors go on to conclude.) The models encourage a descriptive rather than analytic account. The authors might like to consider the use of theory to understand the process of policy implementation rather than these models.

5. It is unclear why type of policy forms the focus of the second case study. The description ‘the policy’ is not sufficient to convey its content, purpose etc.

6. Re data collection, the authors claim they are looking at the entire policy process, but the data is collected for only a proportion of the policy period. This needs to be justified/ explained.

7. The section on analysis is very brief and does not adequately describe the analytical stages/ process

8. There are a number of interesting findings presented, but they need expanding as part of the analysis in order to contribute new knowledge to the field. We know, for example, that stakeholder engagement is an important factor,
but it would benefit from further expansion and analysis. What is it that we learn that is new about stakeholder engagement? Similarly, the authors mention the role of a structured versus a more pragmatic approach to evidence collection and use. More could have been made of this in the analysis. Was Case 1 really ‘strictly scientific’ of might this have been symbolic evidence use?

9 – On page 23, the authors argue ‘Our study adds to this literature by illustrating how processes, value and agendas differ depending on which actors are active, even when the ministry and government involved in the policy process are the same.’ This may well be possible with the considerable body of data the authors have collected, but is not the case in the current version of the paper.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests