Reviewer’s report

Title: From monitoring to action: Utilising health survey data in national policy development and implementation in Finland

Version: 0 Date: 10 Jul 2019

Reviewer: Jonas Finger

Reviewer's report:

In this qualitative study, using focused interview technique and deductive content analysis, it is explored how health survey information from the Finish health monitoring system is utilized for national health policy development and implementation by interviewing 10 senior experts from health policy and research institutions in Finland. I agree with the authors that the use of health survey data for health policy development and implementation has rarely be investigated so far and I think that the presented results are interesting, partly novel and important for actors working in the field. I think that the following issues should be addressed:

Background

- Some more details about the history of health surveys conducted in Finland should be provided in the background section.

Methods

- Page 7, lines 53-58: Consider to report the number of experts interviewed in each institution mentioned.

Results

- Page 6, first paragraph: Be consistent when indicating quotations. Sometimes you use quotation marks sometimes italics sometimes both

- Page 8, line 2: Consider to replace the term 'knowledge-based' with 'evidence-based'.

Discussion

- Strength and weaknesses, page 11, lines 43-48: When reading the expert's opinions of the Finish government employees and the paper in general there is a motion of 'self-praise' of the Finish health monitoring system and a critical reflection of the system is widely missing. Thus,
selection bias when selecting the experts enrolled into the study and the subjective view of the respondents should be mentioned as a potential weakness of the study.

- I think that use of existing theoretical models could help to better structure the interpretation of the results: The 'public health action cycle' is a model which could be used to interpret/discuss the results on 'Policy' and 'Practice' (pages 5-7).

- I think that in the discussion section major future challenges for the EU health monitoring systems such as the EU General Data Protection Regulation (is data linkage still possible?), declining response rates and open data requirements should be addressed in more detail.

- Qualification of the research findings in the research context could be more comprehensive; the body of cited literature in the discussion section is quite thin. More recent relevant literature should be reviewed, considered and cited in the discussions section, e.g.:


- One central aspect is missing in the discussion which I think should be addressed. Political decisions are not entirely based on rational, evidence-based considerations. There are limits to what extent evidence can influence political decisions. The political science perspective on power relationships can help to better understand this policy problem:


Minor language editing: page 5, line 11, erase the word 'in'; page 8, line 50/51, replace 'grare' with 'rare'; page 11, line 39, consider replacing 'repeated' with 'reported by more than one expert'.

Level of interest
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An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

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