

1999 NZCOM Education Framework: Looking back over the past 10 years

In November 1999 the College published an Education Framework (Pairman, 2000) which provided not only a framework but also guidelines for midwifery education at both pre-registration and post-registration levels. When the framework was developed, it was acknowledged that it would need to change and evolve as changes in midwifery education occurred. The 1999 Framework has stood the test of time and has been and remains the backbone framework of midwifery education today. It is an extremely important document as it provides not only a historical perspective on the stages of its development but highlights the journey of education in midwifery since 1990. It also explores the consultation processes which started in 1991 and continued over many years when it was ratified by the College in 1999 and was formally adopted by the NZCOM.

At the Colleges Annual Education forum hosted in August 2009, current postgraduate educational opportunities for midwives were discussed and therefore it was logical that the 1999 education framework was reviewed. This article is an overview of the current framework and explores the changes which have occurred over the past 10 years which have had influences on midwifery education. Key assumptions underpin the 1999 Framework and these along with influences all need to be taken into consideration in the review of the Educational Framework. The aim of this article is to enable the consultation process and to start the process in the review. As with all College processes which operate on a consensus model, lengthy and extensive consultation will be sought from the members and all stakeholders before any changes are made to the existing Framework.

Changes in relationships with other organisations with a role in midwifery education

Midwifery Council of New Zealand

One of the most significant changes that have occurred since 1999 has been the establishment of the Midwifery Council of New Zealand following the legislative change which saw the introduction of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act (HPCAA, 2003). The Midwifery Council took over the responsibility for the regulation of midwives from the Nursing Council of New Zealand on the 18th September 2004. Under the HPCAA, the Midwifery Council are authorised to ensure that health practitioners are competent and fit to practise in their profession.

Along with other stakeholders the NZCOM has remained a key stakeholder and have continued with their partnership initiated with the Nursing Council through to the Midwifery Council. The College has remained as an active participant and a voice for undergraduate students and post registration midwives in all aspects of educational development that the MWCNZ has initiated since 2004.

Clinical Training Agency (CTA)

It was suggested in the 1999 Education Framework that practising midwives needed access to the Clinical Training Agency (CTA) (MOH, 2010) funding. The CTA is responsible for the planning and managing the purchase of post-entry clinical training for New Zealand health professionals. In 2010 Post-entry Clinical Training is defined as:

'Post-Entry occurs after entry to a health profession, so that a person is eligible to practise as a health practitioner under the HPCA Act 2003, and

Clinical is clinically focussed with the trainee spending at least 30 percent of total programme related hours in the direct delivery of health and disability Services to service users, and

Training is a programme equivalent to a minimum duration of at least six full time months that leads to a nationally recognised qualification.'
(MOH, 2010)

Two significant changes have occurred with midwives accessibility to CTA funding. On International Midwives Day, 2006 the MOH announced funding through the CTA for a First Year of Practice Programme (MFYP) to support midwifery graduates. This was the first time that midwives had been funded through the CTA and the MFYP is now entering its fourth year.

Then in 2009, MOH announced that funding was available for postgraduate education. The College and other stakeholders had for some time been suggesting that a course be provided to support midwives employed and working in DHB secondary and tertiary settings. This complex care course, funded by CTA is now in its second year and provides midwives with the academic education and clinical training they require in order to develop their clinical skills and experience in caring for women and babies with complex care needs. The College, Schools of Midwifery, Auckland University of Technology; the Victoria University and the Otago Polytechnic have worked in partnership with the DHB's to provide this course to midwives nationally in New Zealand. The development of these courses highlights that the underlying principle of partnership in the 1999 Education Framework is as relevant for education in 2010.

A more recent development in 2009 was the establishment under section 11 of the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000 (MOH, 2000) of the Clinical Training Agency Board (MOH, 2010). This board will provide advice to oversee the rationalisation of workforce planning, training, education and purchasing within the health sector. It is important that any education framework that the College has ensures that the relationship between MOH either through the CTA or CTA Board is recognised, maintained and developed further to ensure that any future funding for the midwifery reflects the professions needs.

Pre-registration midwifery

Under certain sections of the HPCAA, the Midwifery Council is responsible for prescribing qualifications for registered midwives, accrediting educational institutions and monitoring of those institutions that it accredits (MWCNZ, 2009). Following extensive feedback from all stakeholders, 2007 saw the release of new standards for pre-registration midwifery education by the Midwifery Council. One of the main strategies was to double the number of graduates from NZ midwifery programmes to build and strengthen the midwifery workforce numbers of practising midwives. These changes support the 1999 Framework principle that the profession have a legitimate role in shaping midwifery education and practice in NZ.

Postgraduate education

Continuing Education

NZ midwives have always engaged in educational opportunities both at continuing education and postgraduate levels. However one of the most significant changes relating to education has been the introduction of the Recertification Programme (MWCNZ, 2004). This programme focuses on the professional development needs of each midwife within a national professional framework. Under the Programme each midwife is now required to participate in both elective educational opportunities along with professional development activities over a three year period.

Whilst the introduction of this Programme has encouraged more midwives to engage in educational opportunities the underlying principles and assumptions are not dissimilar to that of the Colleges Education Framework in 1999. There are now nationally approved continuing educational opportunities for midwives which are provided by approved education providers through the Council; Schools of Midwifery, the College at both regional and national levels, DHB and independent education providers. One of the key assumptions from the 1999 Framework was that midwifery education programmes should be nationally consistent, with national standards and outcomes. The review is to test if this assumption is still the underlying principle of today's education Framework?

The purpose of Midwifery Standards Review (MSR) is to provide a supportive and educative focus which emphasises reflective practice. At the time of the 1999 Education Framework only case-loading midwives undertook a MSR. Under the Recertification Programme, today all midwives, despite their chosen practice setting, are now required to undertake a MSR every two years.

Perhaps one of key questions to ask of the current Framework is if its reflects the current workforce population particularly as there are more midwives returning to practice and more midwives from overseas now practising in NZ.

Postgraduate Certificate, Diploma, Master and Doctorate

According to the 2005 workforce data (MWCNZ, 2005) there were significant numbers of midwives studying towards postgraduate qualifications. Almost always these midwives self fund their postgraduate studies. In 2008 the MOH announced targeted funding for Postgraduate education of midwives and the CTA was given the funds to manage. The College, the Schools, the MOH and the DHB's have provided expert advice n the nature of the first postgraduate funded programme. Complex care was identified as a priority. Currently discussion is underway on future courses which should attract funding.

The 1999 Framework supported midwives pathway from certificate through to PhD. Entry to postgraduate education was either with a Bachelors degree or by midwives presenting a portfolio that demonstrates that their ability to undertaken the demands of academic study. The 1999 Framework recognises the concept of recognising prior learning (RPL) which was the key to enabling the profession to enter formal postgraduate studies and by doing so enhance flexibility for midwives.

Today midwives are still engaging in further academic studies pathways as suggested by 1999 Framework. There have some minor modifications in some of the Schools with shorter more clinical focused papers being available as requested by midwives. Despite these minor changes, all midwives are still expected to undertake the same number of credits/points as in the 1999 Framework. As discussed, the opportunity for continued support and funding through the CTA has proposed the question of what funded papers would suit the profession. Discussion at the annual NZCOM educator's forum certainly highlighted that the pathway needs to reflect the current needs of the profession and priority areas for clinically-based midwifery education was seen as important as still engaging the midwife in her own learning pathway. This is an exciting time for postgraduate midwifery education as it creates the opportunity for the profession to engage further in the debate of what constitutes the pathway of future study options for midwives in NZ whilst still supporting the key elements of the graduate's profile.

Summary

Looking back over the past 10 years has highlighted the significant changes for midwifery education in NZ. The 1999 Framework however still holds the key underpinning principles and the assumptions made in 1999 may be similar to those of today. Nonetheless it is vital that the College review the Framework inline with these changes and enable further discussion to occur for the future and the next 10 years of midwifery education.

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