



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Midwifery

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/midw

Final year students' experiences of the Bachelor of Midwifery course



Mary Carolan-Olah, PhD (Associate Professor Midwifery)*, Gina Kruger, MN (Masters of Nursing), CM (Lecturer Midwifery), Ruby Walter, PhD (Lecturer Nursing), Melissa Mazzarino, M Clin Mid (Masters of Clinical Midwifery) (Lecturer)

School of Nursing and Midwifery, St Alban's Campus, Victoria University, P.O. Box 14228, Melbourne 8001, Australia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 8 February 2013

Received in revised form

10 April 2013

Accepted 21 April 2013

Keywords:

Midwifery students

Experiences

Challenges

Support

Aim: the aim of the study was to explore the experiences of final year Bachelor of Midwifery students. **Background:** earlier research indicates that midwifery students experience a number of difficulties and concerns during their studentship. These difficulties can lead to a lack of confidence and poorer integration and socialisation into the profession. Ultimately, poorer integration may lead to dissatisfaction and attrition from the profession.

Methods: a qualitative approach, informed by interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), was used in this study. Ten completing Bachelor of Midwifery students participated in in-depth interviews and reflected on their experiences over their three year course. Data were subjected to IPA analytic steps as proposed by [Smith and Osborn \(2008\)](#).

Key findings: demographics revealed that participants were generally aged more than 35 years and worked 16 hours or less per week. Most had two or more children and lived with a spouse/partner. Four main themes emerged from the analysis: (1) a challenging start; (2) coming to terms with course requirements; (3) developing strategies; and (4) overall satisfaction with the course. Participants generally considered that their individual strengths and determination helped them to negotiate the many challenges they encountered during the course.

Conclusions and implications for practice: this study indicates that students undergo a process of adjustment as they travel through the Bachelor of Midwifery course. The most critical transition phase appears to occur in the first year and students may require additional supports to assist their socialisation into both the university and their course. Particular needs identified include return to study skills for mature-aged students and counselling and support group needs generally. The provision of such supports may assist with the retention of students within the course and may contribute to overall student satisfaction.

© 2013 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

There is an ongoing shortage of midwives in Australia ([Tracy et al., 2000](#); [AHWAC, 2002](#); [Leap, 2002](#); [Bogossian et al., 2011](#); [Pugh et al., 2012](#)) and this situation persists despite many changes to educational approaches and continuing advancement of the profession ([AHWAC, 2002](#); [Carolan and Hodnett, 2007](#)). Additionally, the current workforce is ageing and retirement loss is projected to deplete services significantly in the coming years ([AHWAC, 2002](#); [Bogossian et al., 2011](#)). At the same time, attrition from the profession is a significant issue ([Fenwick et al., 2012](#); [Pugh et al., 2012](#)) and in Australia, appears to be related to midwife dissatisfaction with practice ([Pugh et al., 2012](#)). Similar findings are present in the international literature, where attrition is linked

to midwife dissatisfaction ([Ball et al., 2002](#)), to a mismatch between employer and new graduate expectations and to excessive stress ([Fraser, 2000](#)).

There is good quality evidence to suggest that midwifery students and new graduates suffer from high levels of stress ([Prymachuk and Richards, 2008](#); [Skirton et al., 2012](#)) and are vulnerable to feelings of inadequacy, distress and disappointment ([Thorstensson et al., 2008](#); [Holland et al., 2010](#); [Carolan, 2012](#); [Skirton et al., 2012](#)). Factors that contribute to stress may include a discrepancy between student's and clinicians views of preparedness for practice ([Fraser, 2000](#); [Schytt and Waldenström, 2012](#)) and challenges and complexities of care, wherein the student or new graduate feels inadequately prepared for complex clinical situations, which in turn gives rise to frustration and distress ([Skirton et al., 2012](#)). Relationships with clinicians, including midwives and doctors, have been recognised as very important for building confidence in students' capacity to deal with a variety of clinical situations ([Hughes and Fraser, 2010](#)) and appropriate student support is considered to be a crucial element in such

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: Mary.carolan@vu.edu.au (M. Carolan-Olah), gina.kruger@vu.edu.au (G. Kruger), ruby.walter@vu.edu.au (R. Walter), melissa.mazzarino@vu.edu.au (M. Mazzarino).

confidence development (Donovan, 2008; Holland et al., 2010; Thorstenson et al., 2008; Van Der Putten, 2008). The quality of the learning experience also impacts student confidence and overall student satisfaction (Donovan, 2008) and currently, midwifery educators may be faced with additional challenges in supporting students. This is because contemporary midwifery students are likely to differ demographically from their predecessors, as increasing numbers of mature-aged students enrol in Bachelor of Midwifery or direct entry courses (Seibold, 2005; Banks et al., 2012). There is some suggestion that these students may be less able academically and have more complex problems, and thus have increased vulnerabilities, compared to earlier midwifery students (Banks et al., 2012).

To address such difficulties, Fraser (2000) contends that in addition to meeting statutory requirements for registration, midwifery curriculae should support students to develop confidence and competence in their practice. This view is endorsed by other studies and recent evaluations of new graduate programs, for example, have indicated that adequate support during the transition from student to graduate is critical to confidence building and integration into the profession (Clements et al., 2012; Fenwick et al., 2012). The process of integration should ideally begin during the student years and is facilitated when the student feels valued as a team member (Hunter, 2004).

An exploration of Bachelor of Midwifery student experience is proposed in this study and may provide insight into the factors that contribute to course satisfaction, confidence building, and preparedness for practice. This information may also highlight the difficulties midwifery students face and which contribute to poorer socialisation and integration into the profession. These additional insights may, in turn, allow for earlier intervention and development of targeted support during vulnerable periods of the studentship. Ultimately, supportive strategies may influence greater student satisfaction within the course, smoother transition into the profession and greater retention of graduate midwives.

Methods

This project was designed as a follow on from an earlier project that investigated completing students' views of the 'good midwife' (Carolan, 2012). Findings from that study indicated that students encountered a number of difficulties during their studentship, and that these difficulties had an impact on student's confidence and skill development. The current study sought an opportunity to follow up on issues identified in the earlier research and researchers were particularly interested in answering the following research questions:

- What are the experiences of students within the Bachelor of Midwifery course?
- What aspects of the course do students find helpful?
- What aspects of the course are of concern to students?
- What support strategies would assist?

A qualitative approach was chosen and the framework used in the study was informed by the principles of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), as described by Smith and Osborn (2008). The particular appeal of the IPA approach was its utility in exploring the ways in which individuals 'make sense of their personal and social world' (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 53) through their individual interpretations of events they have experienced. Moreover, within IPA, there is an assumption that an individual's account of an experience is linked directly to their

thoughts and emotions. Thus, the IPA approach potentially would provide access to students' experiences and perceptions within the Bachelor of Midwifery course (Smith and Osborn, 2008), and this was an important consideration for the current study.

Philosophically, IPA is linked to Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology and aims to understand human experience from the perspective of interpretation or 'being in the world' rather than description or 'being of the world' (Ray, 1994; Dowling, 2007; Bradbury-Jones et al., 2009). In this approach, the researcher's interpretation and prior understanding of the phenomenon are considered integral to the research process, and as such, bracketing is not required (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2009). For all these reasons, the IPA approach was chosen as an appropriate and useful framework for exploring the personal experiences and perceptions of Bachelor of Midwifery students, as they reflected on their three year course. Ethics approval was obtained from the University Human Ethics Committee. Pseudonyms are used throughout the paper to protect student anonymity.

Sample and recruitment

All 3rd year midwifery students in 2012 were invited to participate ($n=32$) and a total of 10 students agreed to take part in the project. Recruitment occurred in the following manner: eligible students were approached by the first year midwifery coordinator (who is not involved in the project, but is known to the students). Interested students were given information about the study to take home and read and were invited to attend a specific session at the end of class two days later. At this session, the purpose of the study was outlined along with likely time requirements and the voluntary nature of participation. Opportunities were also provided for students to ask questions and to clarify concerns.

A question list for interview was provided to would-be participants (see Box 1) and this step was taken to allay concern and to allow students to reflect on their experiences. In-depth audio-taped interviews were later organised with student convenience in mind and written consent was recorded prior to interview. Basic demographic information was collected by anonymous questionnaires at the time of interview and included details such as age, hours of paid work, income and living arrangements.

Data analysis

Smith and Osborn's (2008, p. 66) guide to data analysis was used and involved developing 'an interpretative relationship' with each transcript. The four following steps guided the process:

- (1) 'Looking for themes in the first case'
- (2) 'Connecting the themes'
- (3) 'Continuing the analysis with other cases'
- (4) 'Writing up'

(Smith and Osborn, 2008, pp. 66–76)

- (1) 'Looking for themes in the first case' involved listening repeatedly to the interview tapes and reading and re-reading the transcripts to become familiar with the data. Once the researchers felt they had a good understanding of the content, notes and memos were written in the margin of each transcript. These memos contained initial impressions, ideas and early concepts.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1084614>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1084614>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)