Reviewer’s report

Title: Caseload midwifery as organisational change: the interplay between professional and organisational projects in Denmark

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Reviewer: Della Forster

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Caseload midwifery organisational issues paper review – Dec 2014

This paper addresses a topic of wide interest to maternity service providers in a number of countries. The caseload midwifery model is being implemented in many places, and the issues the paper examines are very salient – that is, the factors affecting how readily the model is implemented.

Overall while the paper provides some excellent data, and I am sure the research was very well done, the paper needs substantial revision to ensure it is very clear and easily read and understood. In its current form some parts are very clear, but in others the reader may have difficulty understanding what is being said. I am not sure if there is too much in here for one paper, or whether increased clarity particularly in the background and methods will make the paper clear.

The grammar throughout the paper needs addressing; there are a number of instances where the English is incorrect. The use of the term caseload GROUP instead of TEAM could be considered, given this is the more common term used in the literature. Team tends to imply (or may introduce confusion regarding) the team midwifery model (as opposed to caseload midwifery).

ABSTRACT

Needs to include the date or year this study took place.

Overall abstract is quite difficult to understand – particularly the results. It is not really possible to understand what is the major message or theme. The use of the term ‘projects’ is not clear in meaning – yet it is used in rest of abstract (and throughout the paper) and assumed the reader knows what is meant. It is used extensively in the background – but there is no definition of what the word means in the context of this study and this paper.

It says 22 interviews – but given some of these were focus groups, does that mean there were quite a few more actual people involved?

Abstract overall lacks clarity.

BACKGROUND

While the background provides a lot of relevant rationale and literature, many sentences and concepts are difficult to understand.

This concept of ‘projects’ and the whole background discussion of women in professional roles and in organisations needs more lead-in. By page five there is
a whole theoretical discussion of these issues, but it feels to me like there is a lot of assumed knowledge of the content area and the thinking around these issues. The average reader might (like myself) need a more gradual introduction, or a somehow more clearly explained introduction to these complex concepts. For example, on page 5, lines 11-13….what does this sentence mean? And also, what are the references?

On Page 6, line 10, there begins some sentences that are more readily accessible and understandable. If somehow the sections above here could be written in a more readily understandable way I think it would be very helpful for the reader in terms of understanding the background context and aim of this paper.

Page 4 line 19/20 – what is meant? Line 22 – what does ‘promise of autonomy’ mean?

Page 5 lines 19/20 – what does this mean?

Page 6 lines 1 and 2 - means what? Line 7 – which “former” is meant?

A relevant paper that has used theory to look at models of care that may add value to the paper is cited below:


METHODS

The beginning of the methods that contextual the Danish maternity system might fit better in the background.

Page 7 line 17 – what is meant here?

Page 8 lines 6/7 – were the shifts reduced one per day, or oe person from each of three shifts in a day? Or something else? Not clear.

There is lack of clarity around the 22 interviews. This is the case in the methods and the results. In the methods there are no details provided regarding how the sites were chosen, how the interviewees were selected, how they were invited to participate, who did this, where the interviews took place etc. Likewise once these people are discussed in the results section there is no detail given on actual numbers of participants, just number of ‘interviews’, and no demographic information provided so that the reader can assess how representative the sample was at the sites or in general. While the methods mention the various professions included in the interviews, there is no data provided on the views of obstetricians or health visitors (that I can see) – and maybe this is a deliberate thing and these views are not included in this paper – but it needs to be made explicit. There is no description of the interview schedule(s) and what questions were asked.

In the description of the processes, interests and resources in the methods section the definitions are good, but overall the overview of how this study is developed as a case design is not clear. There is no reference to a case design paper or method. There is a reference to normalisation theory, but the theory
itself is not actually mentioned – so I am not sure if this theory did provide the framework within with the study was conducted and analysed. Possible so, but it is not clear. Given this is a case design, the way this impacted on data analysis was not described – I think it was considered when I read the results, but again, this is not explicit in the methods. For example, were all the interviews analysed by site first and then compared across sites? And were the common themes discussed and the differing themes? Or was the major focus of the analysis to explore the views of the different professional groups? Again I am sure this was all part of the study, but the description of exactly what was done is missing in the methods.

Page 11 lines 1=5/7 – is this a finding or a comment? It is hard to know. Line 8 – which ‘unit’? ‘In contrast’ to what?

RESULTS

Page 17 line 21/21 – it is not clear what this change meant – and also there is no explanation given in the paper about how much time midwives worked in caseload each week, how many women per year they took on, what fraction of time they each worked. It is possible all these details are not required – but I think that the more clearly the reader can visualise the entire setting the better the paper will be.

The Processes section of the results reads really well, but there seems to be no so much focus on the professional versus organisational factors, rather a focus on the differences between sites, and further description. I think a lot is covered I this paper and wonder if it is too much to try do all these descriptions, and then focus back on what appears to be the main aim, to explore this professional versus organisational factors. Should the paper be split in this way? More a typical comparison of the implementation at the different case sites, and then a paper on this overarching area of interest. This is just a thought, not something I think needs to be done. Does the concept of professional versus organisational views best reflect the data? Did the thematic analysis find this, or was this an apriori framework? Sentence one of the Discussion actually states that the aim was to expand the understanding of the organisational changes involved in caseload midwifery – not this comparison.

In the section on Interests there were a lot of concepts that seemed difficult to understand. These included:

Page 23 lines 5 to 8, lines 10/11, line 12 – in what ways were interests ‘strongly influenced’? Are some of the views in this paragraph opposite points? Lines 17 to 19 – hard to understand.

Page 24/25 – this is a good discussion of ward vs caseload midwives views.

Overall the Processes and Interests sections work well – it is the paper prior to this point that I think needs a lot more clarity.

Page 28 lines 8-10 difficult to understand.

DISCUSSION

Page 29 line 11 – ‘bearers’ of ‘projects’ – the language seems inaccessible.
Page 30 line 4 – ‘cutting across embeddedness’ – means what?
Page 30 lines 6 to 10 – this sounds like professional versus personal factors not like professional versus organisational.
There is no discussion of who was included (or not) in the study and how this might have affected the outcomes. There is also limited discussion of the findings in relation to the literature. If not relevant literature was found this could be noted.
Page 31 lines 19 to 22 – I think it might be more likely that a discussion of professional versus personal factors are relevant to the female dominated profession (and topic) in question. I may be wrong, or maybe both are relevant.
Page 31 line 23/24 – these are new concepts in the paper. Means what?
CONCLUSIONS
Page 32 lines 8/11 – was this mentioned earlier in the paper? I think is this is the case it would be helpful that this is made clear in the paper Background.

TABLE 1
Would be good to add in caseload size and also women cared for per year per full time midwife.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published
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'