

Grand Designs: a study of student midwives' use of a 'Room Planner' App to create a normal birthing environment

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Introduction

The environment within which women give birth has a direct effect upon their birthing experience (Hammond et al 2014 Igarashi et al 2014, Walsh 2012). Due to the shift from home to hospital birth most women now birth in an environment which is highly medicalised and one that affects her privacy and sense of control (Walsh 2012).

From the evidence it is vital that midwives and student midwives provide the most positive birthing environment they can for the women they are caring for. In view of this student midwives were asked to design an optimum birthing environment using a free 'Room Planner' App which was downloaded onto iPads. The students' use of the App was explored in relation to birthing environment and as an educational tool.

Methods

Sample: year 1 student midwives (n = 18)

Study design: Explanatory mixed methods sequential design (Cresswell and Plano-Clark 2011).

Data collection: 10 point questionnaire (n = 17), Focus Group – digitally recorded (n = 6)

Birth environment design printouts (n = 17)

Data Analysis:

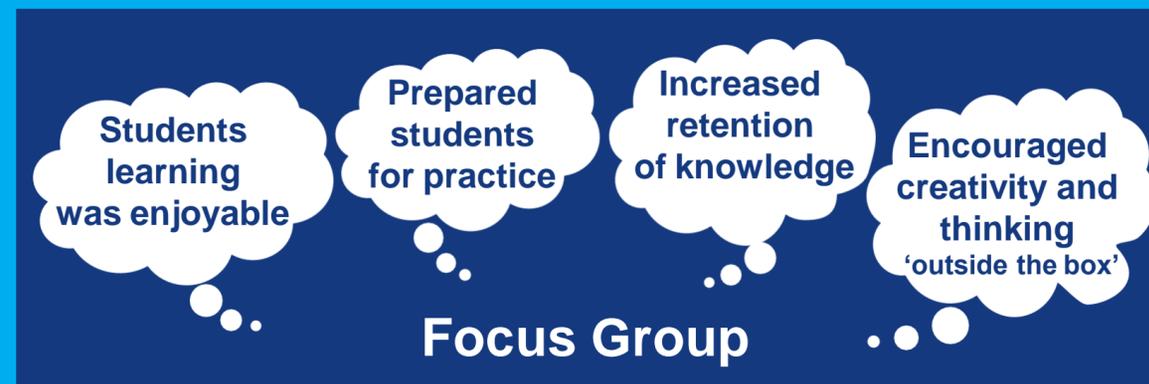
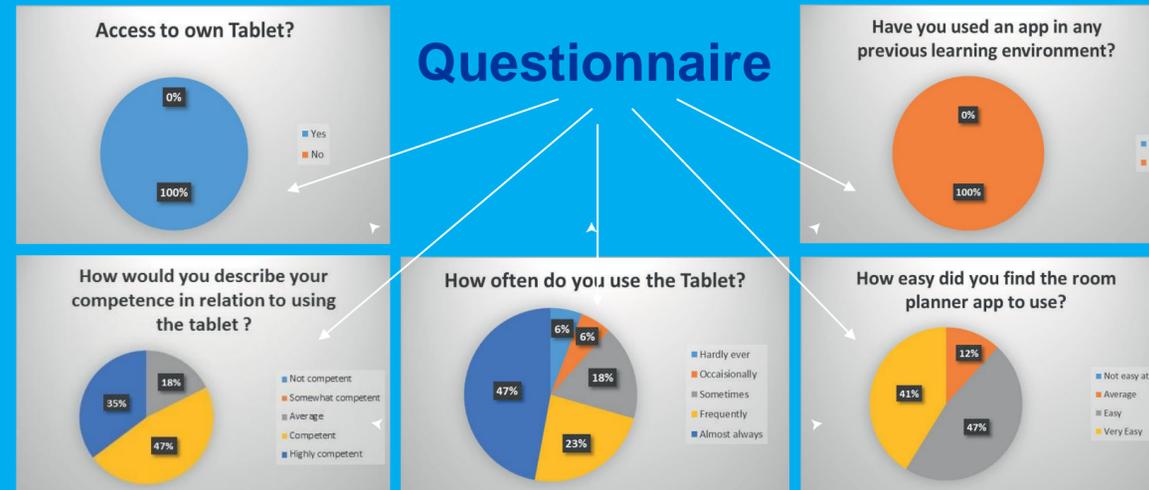
Questionnaire: descriptive statistics analysed manually

Focus Group: thematic analysis (Braun and Clark 2011)

Birth environment designs: visual critical analysis

Results

Questionnaire



Birth Environment Designs

Underpinned by the 'birthing triad' 'woman, partner, midwife'

Comfort Usefulness Aesthetics

Discussion

It was evident that the student midwives were engaging with technology frequently using their own devices, and that their level of competence was good. The group had not utilised an App in a formal teaching environment prior to this session – although their backgrounds and education were diverse.

Using the App linked theory to practice and 'prepared' them for practice. It encouraged creativity and their retention of knowledge.

The students placed great emphasis on the birthing 'triad' of woman, birth partner(s) and midwife when designing their rooms, which featured three main themes: comfort, usefulness and aesthetics. In addition the room designs were aligned to practical, psychological and physical needs.

Conclusions

Today's midwifery students are technology savvy as are the women and families they care for. The use of technology and Apps within the Midwifery Programme can aid learning and bring practice and theory closer - utilising a 'virtual' learning experience for students. In relation to birthing room design the 'birthing triad' of woman, partner and midwife should be considered in order to maximize care, experience and outcome.

References

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