The Scope of Nursing Practice Decision-making Framework: A Picture of Practice in Aged Care

Magdalene Donald Hingst RN
Bachelor of Health Management
Certificate of Gerontic Care

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science (Research)
School of Health and Sport Sciences
Faculty of Science, Health and Education
University of the Sunshine Coast
March 2011
Abstract

The introduction of the Scope of Nursing Decision Making Framework by the Queensland Nursing Council in 1998 was cutting-edge reform in confirming the role of the Australian nurse. The Scope of Practice Framework, now called the Decision Making Framework, is a decision-making tool designed to assist nurses with decisions about scope of practice, delegation, assessment of competence and supervision. The application of the Framework by nurses in the aged care environment in Queensland is largely unknown. This study evaluated the implementation of the Framework in daily practice by nurse managers, registered and enrolled nurses working in residential aged care in Queensland.

The methodological approach for this study was evaluation research. This approach is often aligned with organisational or community research that aims to inform policy development. Fifteen (15) nurses were recruited from two residential aged care facilities located in different regions of South East Queensland and their views were explored through focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Further insight into participants' perspectives was gained through direct observation and documents were sought in order to achieve triangulation. Transcripts from focus groups and interviews and observational data were converted to word documents and thematically analysed to identify data-rich concepts and themes. Data were managed and analysed with the assistance of NVivo 8 and documents were subjected to content analysis.

Three main themes were identified from the analysis. The first theme indicated that confusion about the Framework and effective delegation was common as was abrogation of supervisory roles. The second theme identified role confusion exists between registered and enrolled nurses. Finally, the third theme showed there are expectations within the residential aged care sector that enrolled nurses work outside their scope of practice.

The study draws attention to the need to recognise that the nurses' role is pivotal to the provision of quality service and to provide further education at all levels of aged care nursing to strengthen the overall understanding of the national Decision Making Framework. This may encourage professional decision-making that has the client as the focus.
# Table of Contents

Abstract .................................................................................................................. iii  
Table of Contents ................................................................................................. v  
List of Diagrams ................................................................................................... viii  
List of Tables ......................................................................................................... ix  
List of Abbreviations ............................................................................................. x  
Statement of Original Authorship ......................................................................... xi  
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................... xiii  

1. **INTRODUCTION** ............................................................................................. 1  
   1.1 Background .................................................................................................. 1  
   1.2 Context ....................................................................................................... 2  
   1.3 Purpose ....................................................................................................... 2  
   1.4 Significance ................................................................................................ 2  
   1.5 Structure ..................................................................................................... 3  
   1.6 Conclusion .................................................................................................. 4  

2. **LITERATURE REVIEW** ................................................................................. 5  
   2.1 Scope of Practice Decision-making Framework ......................................... 5  
      2.1.1 Introduction of the Scope of Practice Framework in Queensland .......... 6  
      2.1.2 A Decision-making Framework ............................................................. 7  
      2.1.3 Delegation ............................................................................................. 8  
      2.1.4 Competence, education and qualifications ............................................. 9  
      2.1.5 Supervision ........................................................................................... 9  
   2.2 Impact of the Aged Care Act 1997 on residential aged care ....................... 10  
      2.2.1 Impact of the Aged Care Act 1997 on nurses and their Scope of Practice 12  
      2.2.2 The practice context of residential aged care ..................................... 13  
      2.2.3 Residents’ changing health care needs ............................................... 14  
   2.3 The Process of Change ............................................................................... 15
5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS .................................................. 60

5.1 Theme 1: ‘That's how we run it in aged care’ ............................................. 60
   5.1.1 Work allocation viewed as delegation ................................................. 61
   5.1.2 ‘You don’t really supervise’ .............................................................. 62

5.2 Theme 2: ‘That's not the main part of nursing’ ........................................... 63
   5.2.1 Evolving roles/role confusion ............................................................. 64
   5.2.2 Unrecognised potential for expansion ............................................... 65

5.3 Theme 3: That is the reality .................................................................. 66
   5.3.1 Permanence as a measure of competence ......................................... 67
   5.3.2 Working outside the scope of practice .............................................. 68

5.4 Conclusions and recommendations ....................................................... 69

5.5 Limitations ......................................................................................... 70

REFERENCE LIST .................................................................................. 72

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Information Sheet

Appendix B: Question Guide for Focus Groups/ Interviews

Appendix C: Consent Form (individual)

Appendix D: Organisation Consent Form
List of Diagrams

Diagram 1: Sub-concepts that contribute to Concept 1 ......................................................... 40
Diagram 2: Sub-concepts that contribute to Concept 2 ......................................................... 45
Diagram 3: Sub-concepts that contribute to Concept 3 ......................................................... 48
Diagram 4: Sub-concepts that contribute to Concept 4 ......................................................... 53
Diagram 5: Sub-concepts that contribute to Concept 5 ......................................................... 58
Diagram 6: Concepts merging to form Theme 1 .............................................................. 60
Diagram 7: Concepts merging to form Theme 2 .............................................................. 64
Diagram 8: Concepts merging to form Theme 3 .............................................................. 67
List of Tables

Table 1: Distribution of participants by data collection method .........................................31
Table 2: Aged care nurse participants by role ........................................................................35
### List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACFI</td>
<td>Aged Care Funding Instrument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHPRA</td>
<td>Australian Health Practitioners Registration Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANMC</td>
<td>Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DH&amp;A</td>
<td>Department of Health and Ageing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMF</td>
<td>Decision-Making Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN</td>
<td>Enrolled Nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICN</td>
<td>International Council of Nurses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMBA</td>
<td>Nursing and Midwifery Board Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QNC</td>
<td>Queensland Nursing Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RACF</td>
<td>Residential Aged Care Facility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RN</td>
<td>Registered Nurse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature: ___________________________________________

Date: ________________________________________________
Acknowledgements

This study was part of a larger review of the The Scope of Practice Decision Making Framework in Queensland. As such, limited aspects of this study reflect this, specifically approval to conduct the research from the Human Research Ethics Committee. However, all other aspects of this dissertation relating to nurses working within the aged care environment, were conducted independently from the larger project.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the invaluable input and assistance from my primary supervisor Dr Leonie Mosel Williams and co-supervisor Dr Margaret Barnes of the University of the Sunshine Coast. Their insights, encouragement and patience not only enabled me to bring this study to its conclusion, but enabled me to grow within my profession.