Critical thinking in Nursing and Midwifery; the employers view

Background

Critical thinking, as a graduate attribute, is considered by many authors in nursing and midwifery to be an essential quality for nursing and midwifery practice (Forneris & Peden-Mcalpine 2009, McMullen 2009, Jones 2010, Drennan 2010). Critical thinking skills are considered to be vital in making safe and efficient clinical decisions (Ashcroft 2009), yet developing the capacity for nursing and midwifery students to think critically is a major challenge in nursing and midwifery education (Mun 2010).

Evidence that critical thinking is considered to be important is reflected in the numerous references to 'critical' and 'critically' in the module descriptors of the degree level modules in the BSc Programme in nursing and midwifery in UCD. While there may be a stated educational objective in this regard, the views and requirements of employers of these future professionals, remains somewhat unclear. This project, as part of the wider Fellowship project on critical thinking, aims to address this gap.

Methodology

A number of healthcare employers will be interviewed with a view to ascertaining their views on critical thinking and what they expect of nursing and midwifery professionals in this regard. Emphasis will be placed on what employers consider critical thinking to be and if they value having nurses and midwives who have developed capacity in this area.

Gaining an insight into employers views on this subject will provide important information for curriculum and is in keeping with the view of Jones (2009) that defining and developing graduate attributes, like critical thinking, is a task for educators, policy makers and employers. It is hoped that the outcomes of this project will be used to refine and enhance this area of nursing and midwifery education within the UCD Nursing and Midwifery Programme.

Personal statement

My interest in the scholarship and practice of teaching and learning stems from a curiosity with how it is people learn. Particularly of interest in this project is how it is nursing and midwifery students develop critical thinking for their professional clinical practice their further learning.

References