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COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF A PRIMARY HEALTH
ORGANISATION IN THE HOROWHENUA: A
LONGITUDINAL CASE STUDY

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
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ABSTRACT

In February 2001 the Minister of Health, in announcing the Primary Health Care Strategy (King, 2001), identified Primary Health Organisations as the vehicles for planning, funding and coordinating primary health care services throughout New Zealand. The requirement that communities be involved in their planning and development was integral to this strategy implementation.

Investigation of the Horowhenua Primary Health Organisation establishment process from the inception of planning to the formation of a Primary Health Organisation provided an excellent opportunity to analyse the determinants of genuine community participation. This case study extended over a nine-month period. Data collected from multiple sources provided the basis for investigating the complex notion of community participation and the attributes which are essential for sustainable community engagement.

The Horowhenua Primary Health Organisation Steering Committee comprised community representatives, iwi and local health professionals. This group along with the two external stakeholder groups - namely the District Health Board Funding Division and the District Health Board Primary Health Care Reference Group – were central to the analysis.

The events recorded and observations made throughout the planning period formed the basis of identifying essential determinants of community participation. These included knowledge of the community and its unique “ways of doing”, the dynamic interdependencies both within the Horowhenua community and with stakeholders external to the Horowhenua, changing power relationships, managing material resourcing and accessibility to essential information. These all influenced how this rural community engaged in Primary Health Organisation planning.

One common theme which emerges in the literature is the synergy between community participation and community development. A community development approach is a commonly agreed way of engaging communities in health service
planning which is genuine, inclusive, self-reliant, and self-determining. This research demonstrated that the New Zealand context, where implementation of the primary health care strategy must be nationally consistent and comply with prescriptive, central government-determined criteria - as well as involving communities in a meaningful way - requires an alternative approach. The thesis presents a way of addressing power discrepancies, promoting interdependencies between stakeholders and achieving inclusiveness in all decision-making where “expert” stakeholders and community bring to the partnership a set of attributes and knowledge which collectively informs the entire planning process.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract i
Acknowledgements iii
Table of Contents iv
List of Tables ix
List of Figures x
Glossary and Abbreviations xii

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER TWO
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION: THE LITERATURE

2.1 DETERMINING THE LITERATURE TO BE REVIEWED 5
2.2 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION 7
2.3 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND CONTEXT 13
2.4 BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY 14
  2.4.1 Primary Health Care and Community Development 16
2.5 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION: ISSUES FOR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION 18
2.6 CONCLUDING COMMENTS 21

CHAPTER THREE
NEW ZEALAND HEALTH SERVICES: SETTING THE CONTEXT

3.1 INTRODUCTION 22
3.2 REPORTS AND REVIEWS: 1975 TO THE 1980s 22
3.3 THE EMERGENCE OF COLLABORATIVE PLANNING: THE AREA HEALTH BOARD ERA 24
  3.3.1 The Special Advisory Committee on Health Services Organisation 24
3.4 PREPARATIONS FOR THE QUASI-MARKET ERA 27
  3.4.1 The Health Benefits Review – 1986 28
3.4.2 Report of the Hospital and Related Services

Taskforce – 1988 28

3.5 CROWN HEALTH ENTERPRISES: THE QUASI-MARKET ERA 29

3.6 THE NEW MELLENNIUM: FURTHER RESTRUCTURING 35

3.7 PRIMARY HEALTH CARE STRATEGY: BACKGROUND 36

3.7.1 Population-Based Funding 37

3.8 NEW ZEALAND PRIMARY HEALTH CARE STRATEGY: IMPLEMENTATION 40

3.9 CHOOSING A LOCATION FOR DATA COLLECTION 41

3.10 MIDCENTRAL DHB: BACKGROUND 43

3.11 MIDCENTRAL DHB COMMENCES PLANNING FOR PHC STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION 45

3.11.1 MidCentral DHB Primary Health Care Reference Group 45

3.11.2 MidCentral DHB’s Primary Health Care Strategy 46

3.12 HOROWHENUA/OTAKI HEALTH SERVICES: BACKGROUND 47

3.13 CONCLUDING COMMENTS 48

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION 50

4.2 ENGAGING IN RESEARCH 50

4.3 THE RESEARCH APPROACH 51

4.4 THE RESEARCH STRATEGY IS PLANNED 53

4.5 ONTOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGY 54

4.5.1 The Nature of Reality 54

4.5.2 The Nature of Knowledge 54

4.6 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE 57

4.7 METHODOLOGY: A LONGITUDINAL CASE STUDY 58

4.8 METHODS 60

4.8.1 Snowball Sampling 60

4.8.2 Document Review 61

4.8.3 Media Releases 61

4.8.4 Observation 61

4.8.5 Semi-Structured Interviews 63

4.9 ANALYSIS 64

4.10 RESEARCHER AS PARTICIPANT 66

4.10.1 Reflexivity 69

4.11 DATA QUALITY 70
CHAPTER FIVE
FINDINGS: PART 1: PHO ESTABLISHMENT PROCESS

5.1 INTRODUCTION 72
5.2 THE STEERING COMMITTEE IS ESTABLISHED 74
  5.2.1 Membership 77
  5.2.2 Meeting Times 79
5.3 CRITICAL PLANNING TASKS 79
  5.3.1 Application to MidCentral DHB to form a PHO 80
  5.3.2 Maintaining a Local Planning Focus 85
  5.3.3 Ministry of Health and DHB Establishment Requirements 87
5.4 DISTRICT HEALTH BOARD FUNDING DIVISION 88
  5.4.1 The Horowhenua and Kere Kere Establishment Groups Combine 91
5.5 THE DHB PRIMARY HEALTH CARE REFERENCE GROUP 93
5.6 BEING A PARTICIPANT OBSERVER 95
5.7 CONCLUDING COMMENTS 97

CHAPTER SIX
FINDINGS: PART II – THE VOICES

6.1 INTRODUCTION 99
6.2 WHY DID THE STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS MAKE THIS COMMITMENT? 101
6.3 HOW DID THE STEERING COMMITTEE GET STARTED? 103
6.4 WHOM DID THE STEERING COMMITTEE REPRESENT? 106
6.5 WHAT WAS THEIR STRATEGY FOR ACHIEVING TASKS? 110
6.6 WHAT CONTACTS DID THE STEERING COMMITTEE MAKE? 113
6.7 HOW WAS THE STEERING COMMITTEE RESourced? 116
6.8 WHAT SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE WERE REQUIRED AND HOW WAS INFORMATION ACCESSED? 119
6.9 CONCLUDING COMMENTS 123
CHAPTER SEVEN
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION: DETERMINANTS

7.1 INTRODUCTION 124
7.2 CONTEXTUAL UNIQUENESS 125
  7.2.1 Community Infrastructure 125
  7.2.2 Grass-roots Community Participation 129
  7.2.3 Historical Influences 130
  7.2.4 Steering Committee Representation 132
7.3 RELATIONSHIPS 133
  7.3.1 Relationships within the Steering Committee 135
  7.3.2 MIPA’s Relationship with the Steering Committee 138
  7.3.3 DHB Funding Division’s Relationship with the Steering Committee 139
  7.3.4 The DHB Reference Group’s Relationship with the Steering Committee 141
7.4 THE STEERING COMMITTEE’S INFLUENCE OVER PROCESS 143
  7.4.1 The Influence of the Grafton Consulting Group and the MIPA 143
  7.4.2 Steering Committee Self-Determination 145
7.5 THE EXPERIENCE OF PARTICIPATING 147
  7.5.1 Knowledge, Skill and Access to Information 147
  7.5.2 Resourcing the Project 149
  7.5.3 Community Leadership 149
7.6 KEY DETERMINANTS OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION 152
7.7 CONCLUDING COMMENTS 157

CHAPTER EIGHT
CONCLUSION 158

REFERENCES 164

APPENDIX A Terms of Reference:
  - Community Health Advisory Committee.
  - MidCentral District Health Board Primary Health Care Reference Group.

APPENDIX B Information Sheet and Consent Form 181
APPENDIX C  Template for Recording Observations  184
APPENDIX D  Participants  185
APPENDIX E  Semi-Structured Interview Questions  186
APPENDIX F  Ethics Approval Correspondence  190
APPENDIX G  Funding Arrangements  197
### LIST OF TABLES

<p>| Table 2.1 | Interests in Participation | 20 |
| Table 3.1 | Differences with the New Primary Health Care Approach | 41 |
| Table 4.1 | Subjectivist – Objectivist Continuum | 55 |
| Table 4.2 | Research Strategy | 60 |
| Table 4.3 | Meetings Attended and Data Collected | 63 |
| Table 4.4 | Realignment of Themes | 66 |
| Table 4.5 | Researcher Participation | 67 |
| Table 5.1 | Key Milestones – Horowhenua PHO Establishment Period | 73 |
| Table 5.2 | Horowhenua PHO Steering Committee Representation | 77 |
| Table 5.3 | Critical Tasks Required by the Ministry of Health and DHB for the Horowhenua PHO Establishment | 88 |
| Table 5.4 | Funding Division Attendance at Steering Committee Meetings. Focus: Compliance | 89 |
| Table 5.5 | Funding Division Attendance at Steering Committee Meetings. Focus: Guidance and Support | 90 |
| Table 6.1 | Identification of Voices from Steering Committee Meetings and Interviews | 100 |
| Table 7.1 | Approach to Analysis | 124 |
| Table 7.2 | Significant Events Supporting PHO Self-determination | 146 |
| Table 7.4 | Strengthening Partnerships: Knowing the Community and Facilitating Full Participation | 156 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.1</td>
<td>Eight Levels of Citizen Participation</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.1</td>
<td>MidCentral District Health Board Region</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.1</td>
<td>Philosophies and Fieldwork Conduct</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.1</td>
<td>Horowhenua PHO Catchment Area</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7.1</td>
<td>Steering Committee Relationships with Stakeholders</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

Care Plus  Service which targets high use consumers with significant chronic illnesses
HealthPac  Section of Ministry of Health whose responsibility includes processing contract payments
Iwi  Tribe
Kaumātua  Elder
Kuia  Old woman, grandmother
Māori  Indigenous people of New Zealand
Marae  Traditional Māori gathering place
Whānau  Māori customary extended family

AHB  Area Health Board
CBF  Capitation Based Funding
CHE  Crown Health Enterprise
CIC  Capitation Information Cleansing
CPHAC  Community & Public Health Advisory Committee
CSC  Community Services Card
DHB  District Health Board
GP  General Practitioner
HFA  Health Funding Authority
HUHC  High User Health Card
IPA  Independent Practitioners Association
LMG  Local Management Group
MIPA  Manawatu Independent Practitioners Association
NHI  National Health Index
PHC  Primary Health Care
PHO  Primary Health Organisation
RHA  Regional Health Authority
SACHSO  Special Advisory Committee on Health Services Organisation
SDG  Service Development Group
SIA  Services to Improve Access