

Education of a Nation – Establishing a Needs-Based Education Approach in the Solomon Islands

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Background

- Pharmacy Officers are health professionals (not registered pharmacists) responsible for the distribution, dispensing and counselling of medicines especially within rural districts of the Solomon Islands.
- They are required to complete a Certificate of Pharmacy. After this, few formal training opportunities are available.
- However, further training to improve medication use is desired.
- The Federation of International Pharmacy Educational Task Force suggests institutions use competency-based approaches for developing pharmaceutical services that meet the needs of a country and its people. A review of current needs and services was necessary to develop practice-based competencies standards. These standards could then form the basis of a locally derived educational curriculum (figure 2)¹.



Figure 1: Staff at National Referral Hospital in Honiara

Aim

Establish competency standards that reflect a profession-wide vision for Pharmacy Officer practice, meet national medicine needs and act as an educational framework for future training programs.

Methods

A literature search found six Pharmacy Officer Competency Standards from around the world. Four of these were deemed contextually appropriate for the Solomon's and collated into draft competency standards¹⁻⁴. Validation of the draft competency standards was completed via 4-structured 1:1 interviews, 3 workplace observation studies and 2 focus groups. Following validation, the project steering committee completed three reviews until a final consensus was reached among key stakeholders.

Needs-Based Professional Educational Model

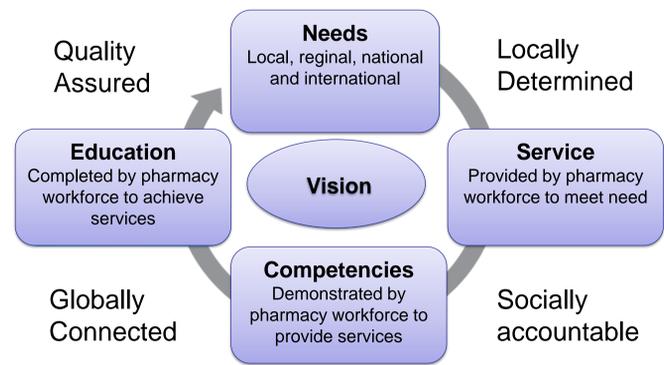


Figure 2: International Pharmaceutical Federation Pharmacy Education Taskforce, needs-services-competencies-education cycle.

Results

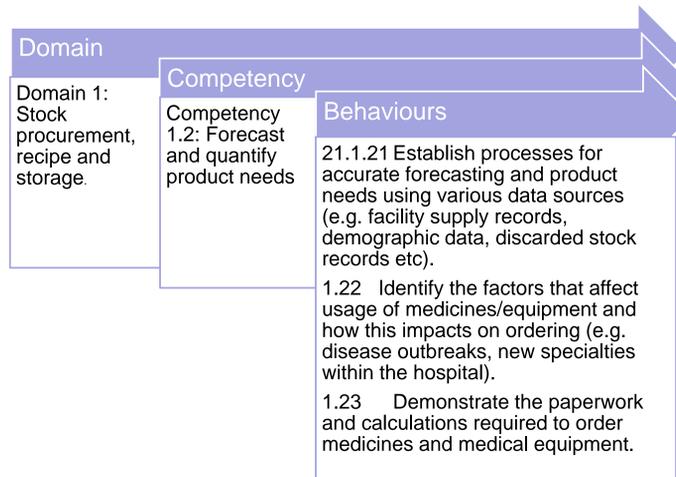


Figure 3: Example of competency 1.2 from the 2018 Competency Standards. Each competency was grouped into a domain and was further described using key behaviors that demonstrate the competency.

Competencies and behaviours within each domain

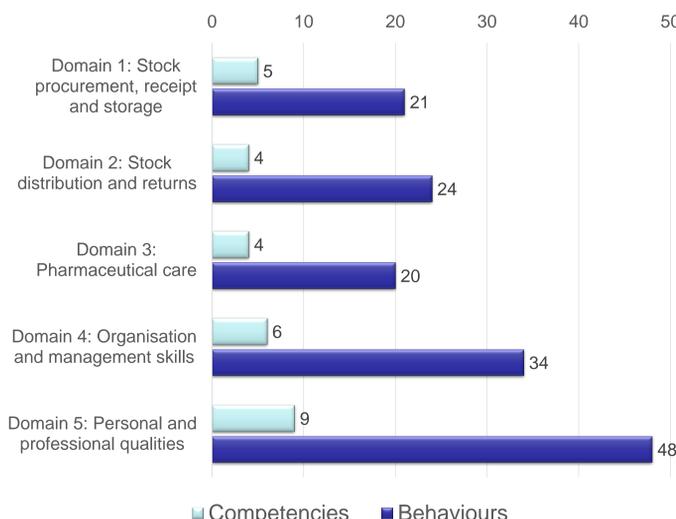


Figure 4: Quantification competencies and behaviors within each domain. On average there were 5 behaviors for each competency.

References

- International Pharmaceutical Federation (2012). *Pharmacy Education Taskforce A Global Competency Framework. Version 1.*
- National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities (2007). *Professional Competencies for Canadian Pharmacy Technicians at Entry to Practice.*
- People That Deliver (2014). *PTD Competency Compendium for Health Supply Chain Managers 1st Edition.* The Australian Institute for Sustainable Communities, University of Canberra, Bruce, ACT.
- UNFPA working within Pacific Countries (2011). *Competencies and Demonstrated Behaviours within Pacific Island Countries - Facilitators Guide.*

Results

The final competencies resulted in 28 competencies categorised into five domains (Figure 2)

- Stock Procurement, Receipt and Storage;
- Stock Distribution and Returns;
- Pharmaceutical Care;
- Organisation and Management Skills;
- Personal and Professional Qualities.

Each domain has two subsections

- description of each competency
- common behaviours displayed when achieving competencies (Figure 3).

Behaviours were divided into *beginner* and *advanced*. Four key themes emerged which differentiated beginner and advanced practice. These were **human resource management, problem solving, organisational skills and pharmaceutical knowledge**

Discussion

Development of competency standards specific for the Solomon Islands has enabled a clear definition of beginner and advanced practice. This framework can then form the basis of a locally derived educational curriculum which targets the competencies needed at each level to enhance service provision and expand Pharmacy Officer scope of practice.

A well-defined career structure has further implications including greater recognition and responsibility for high achievers, higher pay and improved staff satisfaction. These factors should continue to promote Pharmacy Officer as an attractive career path to a broad range of applicants.

Continual evaluation of competency standards is essential to ensure they align with current national needs and services.

Conclusion

The competency standards reflect core domains and behaviours essential to effective pharmacy practice within the Solomon's. They can form the basis for needs-based educational approaches for either beginner or advanced Pharmacy Officer training.

Acknowledgements

- Sharan Davis – Medicines Information Pharmacist, Royal North Shore Hospital
- Andrew Brown - Workforce Development Specialist
- This project was completed while under Assignment for AVI (Australian Volunteers International).