

# Health profession: Social interdependence in active learning evaluated by Delphi procedure

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Physicians must be competent collaborators with team members in order to practice medicine effectively. Health professional students have limited opportunities to work and learn together during the course of their medical education. Not only is it important for students to acquire prodigious knowledge, they must also learn how to collaborate well, and

the results of their efforts must be evaluated fairly to measure the effectiveness of this collaborative, active learning.

Assistant professor Ikuo Shimizu of Shinshu University School of Medicine and collaborators used a modified Delphi procedure to develop the content validity of the students' social interdependence in collaborative learning. Teamwork and collaboration are common goals in all of higher education and the workplace, but not always properly evaluated. It is crucial to come up with a fair assessment that can be utilized for further improvement of techniques and procedures.

Although it was difficult to recruit a diverse panel from abroad, assistant professor Shimizu was able to form a panel of medical students, education experts and medical educators from 8 different countries including Australia, Czech Republic, Japan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Singapore, Thailand and the United States. The medical educators all had experience on collaborative learning such as problem based learning and team-based learning in health profession education curriculum.

Social interdependence theory, widely applied in [educational psychology](#) addresses whether the transformation from [self-interest](#) to mutual interest when the outcomes of individuals are affected by their own and other's actions in positive or negative social interdependence acts as an incentive for collaboration or not. When the common goal can only be achieved by the input of all members and not of just one player, positive social interdependence plays a role in collaborative efforts from all.

In order to execute the study, instrument development was conducted through building consensus among experts in a systematic manner and allowing for multiple feedback rounds and effective implementation. After the instrument development phase, validation of the instrument was performed through evaluating questionnaires. The group was successful in developing a scale for measuring social interdependence in

[collaborative learning](#) by incorporating the opinions of international stakeholders.

Assistant professor Shimizu notes, "In medical education, it is important to develop mutual reciprocal interdependence to aim for better practice while bringing out the best in each other's skills. I hope others will utilize this evaluation method in multi-disciplinary cooperative [education](#). By using this evaluation method, [active learning](#) practices can hopefully be further improved."

**More information:** Ikuo Shimizu et al, Measuring social interdependence in collaborative learning: instrument development and validation, *BMC Medical Education* (2020). [DOI: 10.1186/s12909-020-02088-3](#)

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