

# Perceptions of Thai Healthcare Instructors on Components of Interprofessional Education: A Phenomenological Study

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## Abstract

Perceived competencies of healthcare instructors regarding interprofessional education are an initial step in developing an appropriate nursing curriculum. A phenomenological research design was used to explore the perceptions of competencies in the interprofessional education of healthcare instructors. Purposive sampling was used to select participants from healthcare instructors who have had direct experiences in multidisciplinary teams or interprofessional education for at least five years and were willing to participate. Fourteen participants who met the criteria were interviewed. The data was analyzed using content analysis. The meaning of interprofessional education' competency and five themes emerged from analyzing that represented the participant's perceptions and experiences in the IPE, consisting of 1) Diversity of opinions accepted, 2) Mutual goal setting, 3) Teamwork, 4) Knowledge, and 5)

Effective communication and information. It was recommended that the perceptions of nursing students play an essential role in developing learning and teaching guidelines for IPE. Therefore, a future study should explore nursing students' perceptions, develop learning and teaching methods appropriate to IPE for nursing students, and create guidelines to promote the continued development of IPE skills.

**Keywords:** Perception, Thai, Healthcare instructors, Component, Interprofessional education

## 1. Introduction

Multidisciplinary collaboration and collaborative learning are core patient safety and quality care elements (Smithburger et al., 2013). The ultimate goal of management in multidisciplinary education is the country's overall success in improving the national public health system to create a better healthcare team (Pumuthaivirat, 2020). Interprofessional education (IPE) is a model in which learners in two or more professional fields learn and work together to foster effective collaboration and improve health outcomes (World Health Organization: WHO, 2010). Therefore, education management for health personnel is necessary to develop a curriculum or improve education management by emphasizing collaborative learning of Interprofessional learning to share experiences and practices in teamwork as a multidisciplinary team (Chuenkongkaew, Puthasi, & Trongtorsrisakul, 2014).

Interprofessional education in Thailand follows a conceptual framework of Thailand 4.0 developed from the Framework for Action on Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice (WHO, 2010). Interprofessional education aims to establish and emphasize roles in responsibilities, respect, leadership, teamwork, learning, and reflection that provide students with perceived professional roles and working in a team to the benefit of holistic care of patients (Haohan et al., 2020). Interprofessional education committee in Thailand has produced the curriculum and determined five core competencies for the interprofessional education curriculum, including ethics and shared values, roles and responsibilities, teamwork and leadership, learning and reflection, and interprofessional communication (Chuenkongkaew, 2018; Yeunyow, Howharn, & Promsuan, 2019; Pumuthaivirat, 2020).

Interprofessional education is the learning and teaching of students through experience during their clinical rotations and in practice post-graduation by disseminating knowledge and value of IPE (Kim et al., 2021). Furthermore, interprofessional education is a new learning method that supports the communication between multidiscipline to develop the quality of service for clients with health conditions (Lapkin, Levett-Jones, & Gilligan, 2013). Therefore, learning and teaching management on knowledge and understanding of students, creating learning methods and accurate new concepts, and living with others to gain happiness play a significant role in appropriate nursing (Prajankett, 2016; Inchaithep, 2019).

Praboromarajchanok Institute is a public institution under the Ministry of Public Health that consist of the faculty of nursing and the faculty of public health and allied health sciences. The mission of Praboromarajchanok Institute is to produce graduates and develop health depending on government policy. However, a previous study found that Praboromarajchanok Institute lacks an interprofessional education curriculum because students have learned

several subjects in each discipline (Prathumthon et al., 2020), which is the cause of the lack of curriculum mapping of interprofessional education. Furthermore, it can be seen that a survey of nursing graduate users found that nursing graduates lack competency in interprofessional practices (Nursing Council, 2021).

Healthcare instructors' perceived competencies in interprofessional education are an initial step in developing an appropriate nursing curriculum for the faculty of nursing at Praboromarajchanok Institute. In addition, developing an appropriate nursing curriculum for the faculty of nursing at Praboromarajchanok Institute based on professional standards and values play a significant role for Praboromarajchanok Institute in the future. Therefore, this study explored the meaning of interprofessional education and determined the competencies factors of interprofessional education through healthcare Instructors' perceptions.

## **2. Method**

A phenomenological research design was used to explore the perspectives on competencies in the interprofessional education of healthcare instructors at Praboromarajchanok Institute, Thailand. Such a phenomenological design provides individuals' perceptions with a deep understanding of a natural phenomenon (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The research questions were:

What is the meaning of interprofessional education competencies?

What are healthcare instructors' perceptions about competencies of interprofessional education?

These questions were asked to know how healthcare instructors perceived after teaching through their experiences. The study was conducted from 7 September 2022 to 25 October 2022.

### *2.1 Participants*

Purposive sampling was conducted to select participants from healthcare instructors who have had direct experiences in multidisciplinary teams or interprofessional education for at least five years and were willing to participate. Fourteen participants who met the criteria were eligible for the study and invited to participate, including two nurse instructors, two doctors, two nurses, two dentists, two pharmacists, two physical therapists, and two nutritionists with interprofessional education experience.

### *2.2 Data Collection*

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with healthcare instructors incorporating clinical IPE at Praboromarajchanok Institute, Thailand. After gaining permission, the participants were interviewed face-to-face in a private setting without third parties. Interview questions consisted of:

(1) Could you share the meaning of interprofessional education's components?

(2) Could you tell me about your interprofessional education experiences?

(3) Could you tell me how interprofessional education is essential?

(4) Could you tell me what component of the multidisciplinary competency should have?

The interview guides, including prompts and probes questions, were used until reaching data. An interview was approximately 45-60 minutes. The participants signed an agreement recognizing that the interview was recorded. Participants had the right to withdraw at any time during this study. The interviews continued until data saturation was reached when no new data emerged (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010).

### *2.3 Data Analysis*

The audio data from the interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the verbatim transcripts were read through to extract perceptions about IPE. The data was analyzed using content analysis (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Researchers with openness read the data from the interviews several times. Significant sentences were highlighted, condensed, coded, and categorized. The main themes emerged from the analysis. Finally, the researcher concluded with the final themes. The themes that emerged were reported with participant quotations. These sequences of studies were conducted with supervisors and in multiples to ensure the truthfulness of the analysis depends on the obtainability of rich, suitable, and saturated data (Elo et al., 2014).

## **3. Ethical Approval**

Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of Srinakharinwirot University No: SWUEC/E/G-116/2565. An informed and signed consent was obtained from each participant. Participants were informed that participation in this study was voluntary. The interview information remained confidential and was used only for research purposes. Participants could withdraw from this study at any time.

## **4. Finding**

Fourteen healthcare instructors of Praboromarajchanok Institute agreed to participate in this study.

### *4.1 The Components of IPE Meaning*

The participants provided the meaning of the components of IPE that components of IPE mean “A competency for encouraging team members to work together using team management to allow each professional to perform competencies and responsibilities according to their specialization areas in their professional roles by accepting the expertise of teams and continuously developing specialized knowledge to enable teamwork.” The healthcare instructors incorporating clinical IPE at Praboromarajchanok Institute explained their experiences to gain perspective on the components of IPE as follows.

*“Knowing the value of a collaborative profession that they are already part of the team that is the most important thing is the heart will make the collaboration of multidisciplinary successful.” (Participant 5)*

*“I think there must be competence in each profession. Everyone must have a subject of specialized knowledge of the profession. Everyone must already have the capability, and then in serving patients, giving advice, transferring knowledge, or taking care of patients.”*  
(Participant 6)

*“It shows that the ability on his part must be in terms of the basic knowledge of each professional. In terms of teaching, you may have some training together.”* (Participant 4)

#### 4.2 Overview of the Participants' Experiences

The findings follow the five themes that emerged from analyzing the data representing the participant's experiences in the component of IPE. Five themes were described: 1) Diversity of opinions accepted, 2) Mutual goal-setting, 3) Teamwork, 4) Knowledge, and 5) Effective communication and information.

##### 4.2.1 Diversity of Opinions Accepted

Every professional has the specialized knowledge to provide care for patients. Therefore, Interprofessional must accept the diversity of opinions to be successful in IPE. Moreover, individuals and groups can work together in IPE more effectively toward achieving their shared goals. Therefore, it can be seen that the participants perceived that the diversity of opinions accepted plays an essential role in the components of IPE, which indicate the characteristics of healthcare instructors of Prabromarajchanok Institute who receive diversities of the expertise required for practicing other professions.

*“We should have an understanding of each profession, what the nature of their work is like, and know how the work process of each professional works.”* (Participant.2)

*“Understanding the nature of each professional about different ways to work so that the collaboration can be seen that interprofessional learning is important.”* (Participant 3)

*“Everyone must be open-minded to accept everyone to work together. If everyone thinks that we have to work together with other professions”* (Participant 7)

*“We must respect, accept each other, and that will make the work successful continue. We cannot be there if we do not respect or listen.”* (Participant 11)

##### 4.2.2 Mutual Goal-Setting

IPE can leverage strengths and resources and pool efforts toward achieving a shared objective. Establishing accountability mechanisms and monitoring progress toward achieving the goals is also essential. As a result, the participants perceived mutual goal setting as a powerful tool for achieving shared responsibility and strengthening relationships for IPE toward a mutual purpose. Mutual goal-setting can lead to increased collaboration, cooperation, and a greater shared purpose among the multidiscipline involved to more effective and efficient use of resources, ultimately, and tremendous success in achieving the shared objectives.

*“Dentists, medical technologists, doctors, and nurses are interdisciplinary competence*

*that plays an essential role. Invite him to come out and share his opinion like a nursing professional. (Participant 2)*

*“In our way of working, the aim is to take care of patients or plan together from beginning to end, asking for cooperation, wanting information, wanting to work, and giving advice.” (Participant 6)*

*“Strength of interprofessional education or oneness as if going in the same direction in caring for patients. (P.7)*

#### 4.2.3 Teamwork

Teamwork plays a significant role in the collaborative efforts of individuals working together towards a mutual goal, including a commitment to achieving a shared responsibility and a willingness to work together to leverage individual strengths and resources toward the goal. Influential team leaders are critical in facilitating teamwork by providing clear direction, offering support and resources, and ensuring that communication channels are open and transparent. Teamwork can achieve more than individually and create lasting success for themselves and their organizations.

*“There is shared responsibility as prescribed. We have to take responsibility together and must know each other’s system. The doctor must not miss answering the phone on duty. Meanwhile, the nurse must have followed the doctor’s order and shared the responsibility he had to do according to his role.” (Participant2)*

*“Teamwork is essential because it is all about working as a team. Leadership is critical because the leader collects all the roles and makes everyone’s roles possible. Everyone is autonomous because people know people change themselves, or they may have to command in some situations.” (Participant3)*

*“Competence in teamwork and relationships is essential because everything works. It is teamwork. Suppose we understand each other who has what role and what responsibility. What is our responsibility to do? We must perform that duty. At the same time, if it is multidisciplinary, you also need to know other people’s roles. We will see if this person has a role; he has a responsibility here. It is not just our knowledge; they know us and each other.” (Participant 5)*

#### 4.2.4 Knowledge

Individuals must be committed to ongoing learning and professional development to cultivate endless accumulating expertise, education, and self-improvement in their field of expertise. Knowledge is a mindset that requires a commitment to lifelong learning and a willingness to invest time and more interprofessional education competencies in the continuing success of IPE. IPE knowledge refers to integrating knowledge based on expertise from different disciplines to study or work together.

*“Each person should have their knowledge to bring it together. We will lag behind others*

*if we do not know anything. We were about to keep moving forward. We cannot stay with the same information. We have to go together.” (Participant 7)*

*“Increasing knowledge is the master. If a disease had already developed, we might be less efficient and not relatively current. It will be one of the essential things, new drugs, new treatment methods. (Participant 11)*

*“Level of knowledge should be enhanced to be more interprofessional education competencies. However, there must be further specialized studies comparing newly graduated nurses and newly graduated doctors.” (Participant 12).*

#### 4.2.5 Effective communication and Information

Effective communication and information involve using various tools and platforms to facilitate clear and timely communication among team members and stakeholders. Effective communication is essential to establish clear communication protocols and guidelines that outline communication frequency, tone, and style expectations. Multidisciplinary can access the necessary tools and resources to facilitate communication. Collaboration is also crucial to success in IPE by embracing communication in the necessary training within organizations.

*“There is a dispatch that is a communication system, including documents, a large ward divided into locks, and a person takes care of this place. There is a clear duty of the doctor, which is only communication but also a referral sheet and nothing else. If you are close to talking, the doctor will write a consultation, which is fine.” (Participant 2)*

*“Communication, including spoken language, body language, different languages, and sign language, can communicate. If people work without contact, I do not know how to pass on this idea to another person or patient care.” (Participant 5)*

*“Communication is important to be the master because we have received and communicated information. Lack of communication skills will cause the meaning of communication, giving errors, which may affect the work system.” (Participant 11)*

### 5. Discussions

This study explored the perceptions of healthcare instructors incorporating clinical IPE at Praboromarajchanok Institute, Thailand. Data saturation was reached when participants' interviews revealed similarities through content analysis. Twelve participants shared their perspectives and experiences and their understanding of the meaning, and five themes emerged from analyzing that represented the participant's perceptions and experiences in the IPE component, consisting of 1) Diversity of opinions accepted, 2) Mutual goal setting, 3) Teamwork, 4) Knowledge, and 5) Effective communication and information.

The meaning of components of interprofessional education was interpreted through the participants' experiences and perspectives in actual situations. In the study, the components of interprofessional education mean “a competency for encouraging team members to work together using team management to allow each professional to perform competencies and responsibilities according to their specialization areas in their professional roles by accepting

the expertise of teams and continuously developing specialized knowledge to enable teamwork.” Core competencies of interprofessional education are defined to develop learners with the ability to share values and ethics, roles and responsibilities, teamwork and leadership, learning and reflection, and interprofessional communication (Pumuthaivirat, 2020). Varekojis (2022) stated that IPE competency focuses on making the connections necessary to develop an interprofessional collaborative practice to improve healthcare quality.

(1) Diversity of opinions accepted is a crucial element of IPE that creates new ideas and protects disagreements and conflicts. Diversity of opinions accepted arising from diversity of views is to respect different perspectives. Encouraging respect can help interprofessional better understand each other’s viewpoints and find mutual ground. The diversity of opinions accepted plays an essential role in the components of IPE, which indicate the characteristics of healthcare instructors of Praboromarajchanok Institute who receive diversities of the expertise required for practicing other professions. Recognition of unique perspectives and increased clarity of roles play a significant role in IPE (Alderman, Zerden, & Zomorodi, 2020). Demonstrating respect for multidisciplinary is a significant individual enabler for participants’ successful engagement in sharing knowledge (Wong et al., 2019). Moreover, the interactions among different professionals require the development of respect and understanding from multidisciplinary (Wang et al., 2021).

(2) Mutual goal-setting is a crucial component that fosters collaboration, builds trust, and increases motivation to create shared goals that the group can achieve collaboratively. Facilitating mutual goal-setting is vital to establish a clear and concise communication channel that allows multidiscipline to express their opinions and ideas and to establish for achieving goals, monitor progress, and make adjustments as necessary. Alderman, Zerden, and Zomorodi (2020) found that Shared goals and optimism about the future of healthcare reinforced the IPEC competency. Clear goals regarding IPE activities and the associated training can take positive outcomes (Murdoch et al., 2017). Moreover, IPE implementation should focus on specified goals to join the IPE activities and streamlined goals to determine strategies to achieve its goals (Wang et al., 2021)

(3) Teamwork includes increased productivity, improved decision-making, enhanced creativity, and a stronger sense of commitment and accountability. Promoting effective teamwork is essential to establish clear goals to ensure that the multidiscipline has the necessary resources and support to recognize and celebrate IPE’s contributions and foster a positive team culture based on mutual respect, trust, and cooperation. IPE is also necessary to allow learners to form, act, and be evaluated as a team from a cooperative profession (Shon, Jeon, & Hwang, 2021). Hartford et al. (2019) found that performance teams, cooperative professions, and teamwork significantly enhance clinical performance management. Moreover, teamwork, consisting of leadership team-cooperative professions and teamwork outcome-optimal achievement, plays a significant role in developing a multidisciplinary management course and provides a standard skill set and knowledge base for novice subspecialty trainees (Gilfoyle et al., 2017; Auerbach et al., 2018; Figueroa et al., 2019; Shah et al., 2020).



(4) Knowledge is integrated from a multidiscipline to commit to lifelong learning and embracing challenges and experiences. Knowledge across multi-disciplinary is becoming increasingly crucial in IPE (Kessler et al., 2016; Hewett et al., 2017; Goldman et al., 2018; Abu-Sultaneh et al., 2019; Hartford et al., 2019). It can seem that multidiscipline can use diverse knowledge and expertise to understand IPE better. Moreover, Curro, Shooman, and Foo (2022) found that perceptions and knowledge of multidiscipline increased due to the IPE workshop.

(5) Effective communication and information are essential for successful collaboration and achieving shared goals. The information helps ensure the multidisciplinary involved understands the information being shared. Moreover, effective communication and information can increase efficiency, productivity, and a stronger sense of trust and collaboration. Shon, Jeon, and Hwang (2021) stated that communication is relevant in most clinical settings, and expanding IPE to undergraduate healthcare students will help students practice and overcome these difficulties in advance. The healthcare community attempts to use a communal language based on the context of clinical situations for effective communication (Yu & Kang, 2017). Therefore, communication is a technical skill in a multidisciplinary team working as IPE (Atamanyuk et al., 2013; Figueroa et al., 2013; Wiesbrock et al., 2020). Gilligan, Outram, and Levett-Jones (2014) claimed that communication skills improve for students engaged in IPE.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study explored the perceptions of healthcare instructors incorporating clinical IPE at Praboromarajchanok Institute, Thailand. Twelve participants shared their perspectives and experiences. The data was analyzed using content analysis. The meaning of components of interprofessional education and five themes emerged from analyzing that represented the participant's perceptions and experiences in the IPE component, consisting of a diversity of opinions accepted, mutual goal setting, teamwork, knowledge, and effective communication and information.

## **7. Limitations**

Specific interprofessional skills might be a valuable addition to the perception of IPE components and may have affected results. However, some professionals may have different working experiences depending on the context that may have affected their perceptions. Therefore, a study should explore the interprofessional' perceptions of other institutes to increase valuable perceptions and promote the appropriate and continued development of IPE skills.

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