

# Competency and an active learning program in undergraduate nursing education

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# **Abstract**

## **Aims**

To evaluate the effect of an active learning program on competency of senior students.

## **Background**

Active learning strategies have been used to help students achieve desired nursing competency, but their effectiveness has not been systematically examined.

## **Design**

A descriptive, cross-sectional comparative design was used. Two cohort group comparisons using *t*-test were made: one in an active learning group and the other in a traditional learning group.

## **Methods**

A total of 147 senior nursing students near graduation participated in this study: 73 in 2010 and 74 in 2013. The active learning program incorporated high-fidelity simulation, situation-based case studies, standardized patients, audio-video playback, reflective activities and technology such as a SmartPad-based program.

## **Results**

The overall scores of the nursing competency in the active group were significantly higher than those in the traditional group. Of five overall subdomains, the scores of the special and general clinical performance competency, critical thinking and human understanding were significantly higher in the active group than in the traditional group. Importance-performance analysis showed that all five subdomains of the active group clustered in the high importance and high performance quadrant, indicating significantly better achievements. In contrast, the students in the traditional group showed scattered patterns in three quadrants, excluding the low importance and low performance quadrants. This pattern indicates that the traditional learning method did not yield the high performance in most important areas.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of this study suggest that an active learning strategy is useful for helping undergraduate students to gain competency.