

# Embedding Soft Skills in Health Professions Education: A Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice (KAP) Inquiry on Pedagogical Approaches and Barriers

Kenneth M. Perea  
University of Perpetual Help System DALTA - Calamba Campus  
[kenperearph@gmail.com](mailto:kenperearph@gmail.com)

Date Submitted:  
**April 13, 2026**

Date Accepted:  
**May 21, 2026**

Date Published:  
**June 30, 2026**

DOI:  
**10.5281/zenodo.21054310**

## ABSTRACT

Soft skills are essential competencies in health professions education, yet their integration remains inconsistent across programs. This convergent parallel mixed-methods study examined the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of allied health educators regarding soft-skills integration, including the pedagogical approaches used and barriers encountered. Thirty-nine educators from Nursing, Pharmacy, Medical Technology, Physical Therapy, and Radiologic Technology programs at the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA–Calamba participated in the quantitative phase, while 10 selected participants joined semi-structured interviews. Data were gathered using a validated researcher-made KAP questionnaire and analyzed through descriptive statistics, t-tests, ANOVA, Tukey HSD, and thematic analysis. Findings revealed that educators had adequate

knowledge and positive attitudes toward soft-skills integration, but implementation was only sometimes practiced. Traditional instructional approaches were most frequently used, followed by experiential, collaborative, reflective, and technology-enhanced methods. Qualitative findings emphasized structured assessment, reflective learning, educator role-modeling, simulation-based instruction, feedback culture, and technology-mediated learning, while barriers included limited time, curricular overload, insufficient faculty training, and competing instructional priorities. The study concludes that while allied health educators recognize the importance of soft skills, stronger institutional support, faculty development, assessment tools, and curriculum enhancement are needed to ensure consistent and meaningful integration.

**Keywords:** *soft skills, health professions education, allied health educators, KAP, pedagogy, mixed methods*

## INTRODUCTION

Healthcare professionals are expected to possess not only technical competencies but also interpersonal and professional attributes that facilitate effective patient care. Soft skills, including communication, teamwork, empathy, adaptability, leadership, and professionalism, have become increasingly important in contemporary healthcare settings.

Studies indicate that deficiencies in soft skills contribute to patient dissatisfaction, communication breakdowns, and reduced healthcare quality. Consequently, educational institutions worldwide are integrating soft-skills development into health professions curricula through simulation, reflective practice, problem-based learning, collaborative learning, and technology-enhanced instruction.

In the Philippines, although soft skills are recognized as important components of allied health education, formal frameworks and pedagogical strategies for their integration remain limited. Many educators continue to

rely heavily on traditional instructional methods, resulting in inconsistent implementation and assessment of soft skills.

Despite growing recognition of their importance, limited evidence exists regarding educators' knowledge, attitudes, and practices concerning soft-skills integration. Understanding these dimensions is critical for developing effective faculty development programs and curricular interventions.

This study aimed to determine the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of allied health educators regarding soft-skills integration, identify pedagogical approaches utilized in teaching soft skills, explore barriers to implementation, and provide a basis for faculty enhancement programs.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, wherein quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously, analyzed independently, and integrated during interpretation.

### **Study Setting and Participants**

The study was conducted at the Allied Health Cluster of the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA–Calamba during the Second Semester of Academic Year 2025–2026.

Participants included faculty members from:

- Nursing
- Pharmacy
- Medical Technology
- Physical Therapy
- Radiologic Technology

### **Quantitative Phase**

Total enumeration was employed involving all 39 allied health educators.

### **Qualitative Phase**

Ten educators were purposively selected based on availability and willingness to participate in in-depth interviews.

### **Instrumentation**

#### ***Quantitative Instrument***

A researcher-developed questionnaire consisted of:

1. Demographic Profile
2. Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP)
3. Utilization of Pedagogical Approaches

The instrument underwent expert validation and pilot testing. Internal consistency yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89.

#### ***Qualitative Instrument***

A semi-structured interview guide explored educators' experiences, practices, challenges, and perceptions regarding soft-skills integration.

### **Data Collection**

Survey questionnaires were distributed personally and through designated faculty coordinators. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and documented through written notes and recordings.

## Data Analysis

### *Quantitative*

- Frequency and Percentage
- Weighted Mean
- Independent t-test
- One-Way ANOVA
- Tukey HSD Post Hoc Test

### *Qualitative*

Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring themes and subthemes.

## Ethical Considerations

Institutional approval was secured prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Respondent Profile

Most respondents were:

- Aged 26–30 years (30.8%)
- Female (61.5%)
- Master’s degree holders (94.9%)
- Had 1–3 years teaching experience (61.5%)
- Had no formal training in soft-skills integration (79.5%)
- Had not attended faculty development programs related to soft skills (69.2%)

### *Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices*

Variable	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Knowledge	2.54	Knowledgeable
Attitude	2.59	Positive Attitude
Practice	2.36	Sometimes Practiced

Educators demonstrated adequate knowledge and positive attitudes toward soft-skills integration; however, practical implementation remained inconsistent.

### *Utilization of Pedagogical Approaches*

Pedagogical Approach	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Traditional/Direct Instruction	3.13	Often Utilized
Experiential/Simulation-Based	2.82	Often Utilized
Collaborative/Student-Centered	2.67	Often Utilized
Reflective/Metacognitive	2.59	Often Utilized
Technology-Enhanced	2.56	Often Utilized

Traditional instruction emerged as the most commonly utilized approach.

## Inferential Analysis

No significant differences were found among respondents’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding soft-skills integration ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Similarly, demographic variables generally did not significantly influence utilization of pedagogical approaches, although educational attainment and teaching experience showed some variation in specific approaches.

### **Qualitative Findings**

Eight major themes emerged:

**Theme 1:** Structured Assessment as a Catalyst for Objective Behavioral Evaluation

**Theme 2:** The Instructional Tug-of-War: Curricular Compaction and Conflicting Priorities

**Theme 3:** Reflexive Transformation Through Structured Introspection

**Theme 4:** The Educator as a Living Curriculum

**Theme 5:** Competency Divergence Between Technical Skills and Professionalism

**Theme 6:** Facilitating Professional Accountability Through Constructive Feedback

**Theme 7:** Metacognitive Scaffolding Through Debriefing

**Theme 8:** Digital Observational Modeling Through Video-Mediated Learning

Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings revealed a gap between educators' favorable perceptions of soft-skills education and actual implementation practices.

### **DISCUSSION**

The findings indicate that allied health educators recognize the importance of soft skills and possess adequate knowledge regarding their integration. This aligns with previous studies emphasizing communication, empathy, professionalism, and teamwork as essential competencies in healthcare education.

Although respondents expressed positive attitudes, implementation remained inconsistent. This discrepancy suggests that knowledge and favorable perceptions alone are insufficient to ensure sustained pedagogical practice. Similar findings have been reported in studies highlighting institutional barriers, lack of assessment tools, and inadequate faculty preparation.

Traditional instructional methods remained the dominant approach despite evidence supporting experiential and reflective learning for soft-skills development. This may be attributed to familiarity with lecture-based instruction, curricular constraints, and limited faculty development opportunities.

Qualitative findings further revealed that educators often integrate soft skills informally through role modeling, simulations, reflective activities, and feedback. However, challenges such as heavy content requirements, time constraints, insufficient training, and lack of structured assessment tools limit broader implementation.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative results suggests that the primary challenge is not educator willingness but rather insufficient institutional support and pedagogical infrastructure.

### **CONCLUSION**

Allied health educators demonstrated adequate knowledge and positive attitudes toward integrating soft skills into health professions education. However, actual implementation remains inconsistent despite frequent utilization of various pedagogical approaches.

The study highlights the need for stronger institutional support, structured assessment mechanisms, faculty development initiatives, and curriculum enhancement to ensure systematic integration of soft skills in allied health programs.

### **Recommendations**

1. Develop a comprehensive faculty development program on soft-skills pedagogy and assessment.
2. Integrate structured rubrics and assessment tools for evaluating communication, professionalism, empathy, and teamwork.

3. Increase utilization of experiential, reflective, and simulation-based learning approaches.
4. Incorporate soft-skills outcomes explicitly into allied health curricula.
5. Conduct longitudinal and multi-institutional studies to evaluate the long-term impact of soft-skills integration.

## References

- Abraham, T. H., Stewart, G. L., & Solimeo, S. L. (2021). The importance of soft skills development in a hard data world: learning from interviews with healthcare leaders. *BMC medical education*, 21(1), 147.
- Alshammari, M. (2023). Professionalism and soft skills in healthcare education: A cross-sectional study of faculty perceptions and practices. *Journal of Medical Education and Curricular Development*, 10, 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23821205231165432>
- Alt, D., Naamati-Schneider, L., & Weishut, D. J. (2023). Competency-based learning and formative assessment feedback as precursors of college students' soft skills acquisition. *Studies in Higher Education*, 48(12), 1901-1917.
- Aronson, L. (2021). Twelve tips for teaching reflection at all levels of medical education. *Medical Teacher*, 43(3), 253-259. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2020.1807484>
- Asefer, A., & Abidin, Z. (2021). Soft skills and graduates' employability in the 21st century from employers' perspectives: A review of literature. *International Journal of Infrastructure Research and Management*, 9(2), 44-59.
- Boud, D., & Molloy, E. (2023). Rethinking feedback in health professions education: The role of peer review. *Journal of Clinical Pedagogy*, 18(2), 145-159.
- Brown, G. T., & Harris, L. R. (2022). *The role of self-assessment in higher education: Theory and practice*. Routledge.
- Chan, C. K. Y., & Luk, L. Y. Y. (2022). Academics' beliefs and institutional barriers in developing and assessing holistic competencies in higher education. *Higher Education*, 83(6), 1307-1327. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-021-00743-2>
- Chan, Z. C., & Chan, S. M. (2021). Reflection in nursing education: A survey of educators' practices and barriers. *Nurse Education Today*, 98, 104-115.
- Chatzea, V. E., Logothetis, I., Kalogiannakis, M., Rovithis, M., & Vidakis, N. (2024). Digital educational tools for undergraduate nursing education: a review of serious games, gamified applications and non-gamified virtual reality simulations/tools for nursing students. *Information*, 15(7), 410.
- Chen, I., & Macklin, R. (2022). Building ethical sensitivity: The role of structured introspection in nursing simulations. *Journal of Clinical Ethics and Education*, 15(2), 112-125.
- Cheng, A., Grant, V., & Dieckmann, P. (2020). Designing and facilitating effective debriefing in health professions simulation. *Medical Teacher*, 42(2), 165-171. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2019.1690979>
- Cheng, A., Grant, V. J., Huffman, J., Burgess, G., Szyld, D., Robinson, T., & Eppich, W. (2020). Coaching the debriefer: Peer assessment and feedback for healthcare simulation educators. *Simulation in Healthcare*, 15(5), 319-325. <https://doi.org/10.1097/SIH.0000000000000438>
- Cherbonnier, A., Hémon, B., Michinov, N., Jamet, E., & Michinov, E. (2025). Collaborative skills training using digital tools: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 41(7), 4155-4173.
- Cowan, L. S., & Kodak, T. (2024). Professional skills for behavior analysts: A survey on the proficiency and importance of hard and soft skills. *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, 17(1), 199-211.
- Cruess, S. R., Cruess, R. L., & Steinert, Y. (2020). Role modelling in the development of professional identity. *The Clinical Teacher*, 17(6), 578-583. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tct.13251>
- Daly, S., McCann, C., & Phillips, K. (2022). Teaching soft skills in healthcare and higher education: a scoping review protocol. *Social Science Protocols*, 5(1), 1-8.
- Dolev, N., Naamati-Schneider, L., & Meirovich, A. (2021). Making soft skills a part of the curriculum of healthcare studies. In *Medical education for the 21st century*. IntechOpen.
- Fukkink, R. G., Trienekens, N., & Kramer, L. J. C. (2022). Video-based coaching in the training of medical professionals: A systematic review. *Medical Education Online*, 27(1), 2056021. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10872981.2022.2056021>
- Garcia, A., de Almeida, R., & Silva, M. (2025). Digital competencies and the evolution of soft skills in the modern medical curriculum. *Journal of Technology in Health Education*, 19(1), 45-62.