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Promoting Communication and Socialisation in Music Therapy for Children with Cerebral Palsy

Research thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music Therapy at the New Zealand School of Music, Wellington

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Communication and Socialisation in Music Therapy with Cerebral Palsy

ABSTRACT

This research was conducted as an exploratory case study as identified by Yin (2009) using primarily qualitative data gathered from a clinical practice setting with young children. The primary aim was to find out how music therapy could promote communication and socialisation for children with cerebral palsy at an Early Intervention Conductive Education Centre. This case study research involved two in-depth cases of children diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy at different levels of severity at aged four to five years old. It documents individual music therapy sessions over a three month period. Assessments of the two children’s communication and socialisation skills were made using the Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming System for Infants and Children (AEPS) to provide a comparison before and after the intervention. Staff perceptions about the nature of the children’s communication and socialisation in music therapy were sought using a short and informal interview with two staff members at the Centre. These three data sources were triangulated in the analysis and the findings are discussed individually. Each child showed diverse observable improvement in communication and socialisation based on perspectives of staff members interviewed, on clinical notes and on the AEPS evaluations. It is hoped that this mixed methods study could lead towards a more specific quantitative inquiry in the future about the effectiveness of music therapy for children with cerebral palsy.
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Ethical approval has been obtained following expedited review for this research project from the Central Regional Ethics Committee, (Reference Number: CEN/10/EXP/039).
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