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Beyond Imitation, Without Limitations:

**A Student Music Therapist Supports the Participation and
Development of Young People with Profound and Multiple Learning
Difficulties in a School Setting**

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Wellington in partial fulfilment for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study sought to uncover the methods and techniques a student music therapist employed to support the participation of young people with complex needs in a school setting. Individual music therapy sessions were carried out over nine months, and clinical documentation was generated throughout this period. Data sources included clinical notes, a reflective journal, and audiovisual recordings from music therapy sessions. Once a research question had been established, the existing data was reviewed retrospectively through a process of secondary analysis, and both inductive and deductive methods of analysis were employed to enable meaningful interpretations of the data to occur. A process of coding and thematically linking elements of music therapy practice allowed for a model of understanding to emerge, and findings suggest that the behaviours and strategies utilised by the student music therapist to support the young people's participation in music therapy fell into three thematic groupings: creating a collaborative environment; following and leading; and dynamic flow. Themes are defined and the codes within elaborated upon, with case examples from the data included as appropriate to illustrate their meaning. Findings are discussed, and links are made to the literature in relevant fields. While results cannot be generalised to other settings, it is hoped that the detail and in depth analysis of practice provide a thorough and meaningful insight into the types of interaction that can occur in music therapy with young people with complex needs, and the value of specific supports to participation identified in this research.

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