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**AN EXPLORATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACCH AND A
MUSIC THERAPY STUDENT'S PRACTICE IN A SPECIAL EDUCATION
SETTING**

An exegesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a degree of

Master of Music Therapy

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how aspects of Schopler's TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication Handicapped Children) might be related to music therapy practice, using my own practice in an attached unit at a public primary school in New Zealand as a guide. Using a deductive exploratory research approach, I investigated whether and to what extent themes drawn from TEACCH literature were also evident in my music therapy data. This approach can also be described as secondary analysis of data. That is, clinical data relating to individual and group music therapy sessions with children who have autism was subjected to a process of thematic analysis to answer the research question.

The TEACCH philosophy advocates a structured teaching approach in order to support students with autism to develop independence and skills for self management. This study finds that many elements of music therapy practice are closely linked to TEACCH values. Results from the study show that many TEACCH strategies align with fundamental aspects of music therapy, but the frequency and consistency of these similarities can vary due to the diverse strengths and needs of individuals with autism. As the process of comparing the TEACCH literature to my clinical practice developed and changed, some aspects of TEACCH became more integrated within my music therapy practice. The study also highlights the importance of balancing structure and freedom within the work and how musical structure or form can link with TEACCH strategies.

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