

## ARTICLE

# An open door to the job market? Music therapy students' reflections on practice placement in Norway

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the transition between learning at university and learning in a work context through practice placement. It was conducted at the University of Bergen (UiB), which offers a five-year programme in music therapy. Practice placement is integrated at all levels of the programme, starting with observation of music therapy, to a placement where students work more autonomously. The aim of this study was to learn from the experiences of students participating in the programme, as their insights are crucial for informing the programme's content. Our question was: How do students from the UiB five-year integrated music therapy programme reflect on their internship experiences, and how can we understand their reflections from a work-based learning perspective? To investigate this, we conducted two focus groups, each with five students. Following a thematic analysis of the data, three main themes and six sub-themes were developed: 1. Developing an identity as a music therapist (1.1. Gaining a professional identity, 1.2. Finding a voice in interdisciplinary meetings); 2. An open door to the job market (2.1. Learning from experience, 2.2. Developing new networks); and 3. Challenges with the music therapy practice placement (3.1. Feeling side-lined, 3.2. Lack of a broader teaching model). The themes, grounded in the empirical findings, are discussed from a sociocultural perspective, drawing on concepts such as apprenticeship learning, community of practice, and weak ties. This article concludes with implications for practice and suggestions for further research.

## KEYWORDS

music therapy  
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## INTRODUCTION

Practice placement is usually a central component of music therapy education (Bolger & Murphy, 2024). This article concerns students' reflections on their practice placement experiences during and after their five-year integrated music therapy programme at the University of Bergen (UiB). The article has been written as a collaborative process between an educator, a student, and a graduate from UiB, and in discussion with an educator from Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh. The UiB music therapy programme includes five compulsory periods of practice placement, which support students' learning from active observation to working independently as practitioners. Thus, upon completing the programme, music therapy graduates are ready to practise autonomously. The aim of practice placements is to help students develop a reflective, critical, and creative relationship with their work. This study does not focus on the details of how practice placements are organised and implemented, but instead aims to contribute to a dialogue between students and staff about these practical components of the programme. While the authors of this article are listening to the students' experiences from one music therapy programme (and, in doing so, hope to respond and increase the programme's quality), they consider the relevance more broadly and to other training programmes too. The purpose of this article is to explore and reflect on the integral role of practice placements in music therapy education, specifically within the context of the five-year integrated programme at UiB.

## Background literature

To investigate the objective of this study, we carried out a literature search to explore relevant previous studies in this area. Search terms including "work-based" and "practice-based learning" were used, and there was found to be little research concerning music therapy students' reflections on practice placement, although we recognise that some programmes gather such feedback on a regular basis through placement audits and other staff/student consultation.

We position our study in the context of what has been labelled work-based learning (WBL). WBL, which in this context can also be referred to as practice-based learning (PBL), involves independent practice with the guidance of a supervisor, often a music therapist. According to the Bologna process, all university degrees must qualify students for real working life (Schomburg & Teichler, 2011). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (Samuelsen et al., n.d.) labels educational initiatives that integrate academic learning with 'real-world' work experiences as WBL (Shoenfelt et al., 2013). WBL is important in educational settings to meet the rapidly changing trends of globalisation and technological change. WBL can be described as a structured approach combining classroom teaching with practical work experience, allowing students to acquire and apply knowledge and skills in a professional setting (Tellmann, 2017). By bridging theory and practice, WBL provides students with opportunities to gain 'hands-on' experience for a particular profession and, indeed, across different professions, and may be in the form of a placement, internship, apprenticeship, cooperative education programme, or mentorship. The Bologna Process

(Schomburg & Teichler, 2011) highlighted the voices of students in higher education as one of the key principles in promoting student-centred learning.

Turning to music therapy research literature, we searched for relevant studies to focus initially on research that highlights students' experiences. The chosen studies demonstrate the value of listening to the voices of the students and learning from local contexts. We believe that the positioning of students' voices is essential to ensure that practice placements are grounded in mutuality and collaboration and learning from student's experiences. Following this line of reasoning, we see students as being on the frontline of the profession. Their first-hand experiences provide valuable insights into the evolving needs and emerging trends in music therapy, and they help us identify gaps in the existing curricula. By incorporating student feedback, the programme can ensure that their programmes remain relevant and responsive to the demands of real-world practice (Matthews & Dollinger, 2023).

From an Australian perspective, Seah and McFerran (2015) followed five music therapists in the first six months of their practice, focusing on their transition from student to therapist. They found that the students experienced a mix of being able to develop mental strengths and personal resources while also experiencing challenges related to taking ownership of the situation. The interviews revealed a paradoxical feeling of excitement and nervousness when entering practice. In a more recent USA study, Byers and Meadows (2022) found six major barriers to professional identity formation: (1) a lack of access to and support from fellow music therapists; (2) workplace bureaucracy and tedium; (3) feeling misunderstood by non-music therapist team members; (4) constantly needing to advocate and prove their worth; (5) low job satisfaction, including excessive work hours, unrealistic productivity goals, low salaries, and lack of job security; and (6) the emotionally draining nature of clinical work. They suggest that creating support systems through professional organisations is essential for supporting early career identity formation. Support incentives can, for example, be early career support programmes that include mentorship, supervision, and advocacy training.

In the USA, Wheeler (2002) interviewed music therapy students with the aim of investigating their experiences and concerns during internships. Different areas of interest were identified, such as challenges with fear and anxiety encountered by students when meeting clients for the first time, the means of dealing with such challenges in terms of developing self-devised strategies for dealing with discomfort, involvement with clients, and areas of learning, supervision issues, and structure of the practicum (Wheeler, 2002). Wheeler's study calls for flexibility in approaching clinical training and for working to meet individual student's needs. In a quantitative study, Oklahoma et al. (2019) explored differences between the students' and supervisors' understanding and expectations of learning in practice. Results showed perceptual differences between students and supervisors in evaluating practicum experience, training expectations, and evaluation of students' clinical, musical, and professional competencies.

This is the first research study into music therapy WBL in a Norwegian setting. As such, the study fills an identified knowledge gap. Learning from previous studies, and leaning into our hope to share practice and inform others, we asked the following question: How do students from the UiB five-year integrated music therapy programme in Norway reflect on their internship experiences, and how can we understand their reflections from a WBL perspective?

## METHOD

This study draws its epistemological foundations from phenomenology and hermeneutics, situated within the broader framework of constructionism (Kvale et al., 2014; Matney, 2018). The process of writing this article started with a shared interest between students and staff in exploring the role of PBL within the UiB's five-year music therapy programme. This research is consequently motivated by a desire to find out how music therapy students reflect on their experiences from practice placements, discuss implications for practice, and contribute to the ongoing development of the programme. By interviewing students from the programme, we gained insight into their experiences and specific challenges related to practice placement. The project grew out of a general interest in how practice placement works at the integrated music therapy programme in Bergen. The first author of this article applied for funding from Polyfon, a music therapy knowledge cluster located at UiB (Polyfon, 2023). The first author invited a selection of recent graduates and final-year students to reflect in focus groups on their internship experiences, such as job opportunities, alumni networks, self-care, and relationships with colleagues. A call was made, and current and past students were recruited based on the response. Criteria for participation were based on their status as students in the programme, either fifth year or one-year post-graduating. Two focus groups were organised, one with students and one with music therapists. Participation was voluntary and current students were reassured that their choice about participation would not affect their programme or learning in any way.

### Recruitment and a brief description of the participants in the study

Ten students participated in the study, seven identified as male, and three as female, aged between 23 and 25 years. They were chosen as part of a purposive sampling approach, which seeks to recruit information-rich cases that can be studied (Kvale & Brinkman, 2015). We wanted to talk with specific individuals who were either enrolled in the five-year integrated music therapy programme and in their fifth (final) year, or with those who had graduated from the programme within a year. All participants had taken part in practice placements throughout their programme in different work areas. As such, they had gained experiences with music therapy in different contexts, such as hospitals, schools, child protection and drug rehabilitation centres.

### Conducting the focus groups

We conducted two focus groups with five persons in each group. Across the two focus groups, each lasting approximately 60 minutes, we allowed participants to elaborate on what they felt was important to discuss. Our choice of research method was inspired by a narrative, episodic interview approach (Flick, 2000; Mueller, 2019), which aligns with our goal of capturing rich, experiential insights from the perspectives of students and graduates. The focus groups were facilitated using an interview guide that also allowed room for spontaneous follow-up comments or questions (Clarke & Braun, 2014). The prompts included asking participants about their experiences of job opportunities, alumni networks, self-care, and relations with colleagues. Before the focus groups began, participants were reminded of the study's purpose and consent, and that they were being

audio-recorded. They were conducted in Norwegian and translated into English later in the analysis process. The participants were invited to read and check through the interview transcriptions afterwards, but only a small number of informants responded to this offer. Where they did, we used the feedback to enhance our understanding. This procedure is like member checking, which aims to enhance trustworthiness, accuracy, credibility, and transferability (Seale, 1999).

## Reflections on biases and positionalities

The positionalities of the authors need to be clarified as each brings a different perspective. The first author, Viggo Krüger, has a role as both a teacher of some of the participants and researcher. The second author is a graduate of the programme, and the third author was a student whilst this article was being written. The fourth author is from another music therapy programme at a different university. Krüger's role as teacher and researcher likely influenced how and what participants shared about their experiences and which topics they chose to discuss. Acknowledged as problematic and paradoxical in the research literature, the double role presents challenges, and it is imperative to examine the specific benefits and pitfalls for the particular research context (Kvale, 1999). Negative aspects include potential bias in responses and findings due to an established teacher-student relationship. However, efforts were made during the focus groups to maintain open dialogue, allowing participants to express themselves freely.

## Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis was chosen as the analytic technique for its suitability in uncovering patterns and underlying meanings within the diverse dataset obtained from the focus group discussions. Given the study's exploratory nature and the aim of understanding students' reflections on their internship experiences, thematic analysis offered a flexible and adaptable framework (Hoskyns, 2016) yet rigorous approach to identify and interpret key themes emerging from the data. Following guidelines outlined by Clarke and Clarke (2014), the process of analysing the data followed these steps:

1. *Data transcription*: The interview audio files were transcribed using Microsoft Word. While the first author conducted the focus groups, the second author transcribed them and then translated them from Norwegian to English.
2. *Data familiarisation*: While reading and re-reading the transcription, notes were written of initial impressions, emerging ideas, and noteworthy observations.
3. *Generating initial codes*: Each initial code generated in this stage was crafted to encapsulate specific aspects and nuances in the data. This systematic coding process organised the data into manageable units, facilitating further analysis. In this part of the process, the codes and relevant quotes were also translated from Norwegian to English, and English was used from this point on in the analysis.
4. *Identifying and collating themes*: In this phase, the analysis shifted focus towards identifying overarching themes. This entailed a methodical and in-depth review of the generated codes

to identify commonalities, recurring concepts, and patterns that transcended individual codes. Codes were grouped into potential themes and sub-themes, thus providing a framework for further exploration.

5. *Reviewing and refining themes*: In this stage, the themes were viewed in relation to the entire data set and the initial codes, which led to the refinement of the identified themes.

For the theoretical discussion, we relate to a sociocultural perspective inspired by Lave and Wenger (1998), Lave (1988) and Granovetter (1973). We discuss how a WBL-oriented approach to music therapy education can be understood in terms of concepts such as community of practice, apprenticeship learning and weak ties. These are concepts previously discussed in the literature on practice placement and music therapy. For example, Vaillancourt (2012) writes about apprenticeship in supervision. She relates the term apprenticeship to Lave and Wenger (1991), who advocate that apprenticeship should continue as it resonates with the idea of passing on good practice. However, like a folk tune being passed on aurally, it is important that knowledge is not fixed, and practice can evolve through such embodied exchange. Arnesen (2005) also emphasises the need to train the supervisors and discusses how to facilitate and ensure the quality of a good internship. The third author was responsible for carrying out the first three steps of the method. In the fourth step, the first three authors were involved in a collective analysis process, as influenced by Eggebø (2020). During this process, we reviewed the data and discussed the data material. Towards the end of the analysing process, the fourth author was invited to join the discussion through online meetings.

## Ethical considerations

The study was approved by RETTE (System for Risk and Compliance), which is UiB's system for the processing of personal data in research. The participants were informed of all aspects of the study and signed consent before taking part. Careful planning and consideration of all parties ensured that the focus group was conducted ethically and appropriately.

## FINDINGS

The results are presented as constructed themes based on the analytical steps described, and translated extracts of the participants' focus groups (taken from the transcription) are included. Some of the codes from the original analysing process are included for clarity.

1.0 Developing an identity as a music therapist	2.0 An open door to the job market	3.0 Challenges with the music therapy practice placement
1.1 Gaining a professional identity	2.1 Learning from experience	3.1 Feeling side-lined
1.2 Finding a voice in interdisciplinary meetings	2.2 Gaining access to new networks	3.2 Lack of a broader teaching model

**Table 1:** Overarching themes and subthemes identified during data analysis



## 1.0 Developing an identity as a music therapist

### 1.1 Gaining a professional identity

The first subtheme concerns insights on gaining an identity as a professional. All the participants regarded practice placement as important and a good start in exploring their professional role as a music therapist. The participants conveyed various accounts of how practice placement formed their professional identity. Practice placement was expressed as a good experience and as important for their developing identity as a music therapist. For some, practice placement was the most important part of the programme, where they could get the most out of the programme by utilising skills and techniques learned at university.

#### Deeper understanding

Practice placement was described as an important way for students to gain a deeper understanding of theoretical concepts they were learning about at the University. As one participant explained:

The scientific part [of the programme] is one thing, and the articles to which you are introduced about music therapy are another thing, but when you put it together with practice, it at least gives me a much greater meaning and greater insight.

Moreover, practice placements were described as time for exploring oneself as a therapist, as this participant highlighted, "For my part, it was just about finding myself as a therapist."

### 1.2 Finding a voice in interdisciplinary meetings

In the focus groups, participants talked about how they experienced meeting other healthcare professionals from professions such as medicine, psychology, and social work. The second sub-theme concerns these experiences and their need to find their voice.

#### Exploring the cornerstone model of music therapy

Some of the students explained that some models of music therapy supported them in talking about music therapy, as illustrated by this participant: "I'm a big fan of the fact that we have some such cornerstones and explanatory models for music therapy to preserve space that we as music therapists can put into it."

#### Being misunderstood and learning to adapt

However, some felt that the challenge of protecting the uniqueness of music therapy also put them in difficult situations. They expressed a feeling of not being able to communicate in a way that their practice could be understood, and the language of music therapy was somehow problematic, as explained here: "I get a bit frustrated as to why we use such vague words from the programme that other professionals can only vaguely interpret [...] this creates room for misunderstanding." In finding their voice as music therapists, it was important for them to reconsider or adapt certain

familiar concepts, especially when working in an area where music therapy is less well known, as conveyed by this statement:

I think we must think about how we can adapt to and enter the fields we want. If this comes at the expense of not using words such as "musicking" and all these terms, then I think it is a price worth paying.

### Reciprocity of finding your voice

To maintain a voice, participants felt it was necessary to relate to the language of other disciplines and understand how other professionals communicated, expressed by one of the participants in the following way: "Being well-versed in terminology that is common between disciplines and between professional fields means that you [...] interact with other professions." Finding your voice as a professional music therapist was described as a reciprocal process, as this participant explains:

[finding your voice] occurs when it goes both ways [...] if we can express ourselves, and if we know languages from other fields, but can still preserve our own so that others can also spin off our proposals [...] otherwise, it is not interdisciplinary.

## 2.0 An open door to the job market

### 2.1 Learning from experience

Most participants considered the placement a soft transition to work life, a transition where safety (particularly through frequent supervision) played a key role. Practice placement was described as an arena for experiential learning, where meeting people experiencing very difficult life circumstances was very important for their own growth and development as a therapist, as this quote illustrates, "You meet slightly different people in practice, so you at least have a little insight into how you react in challenging situations, for example if you meet someone with a history of abuse." Moreover, one challenge experienced by the students was that they sometimes felt overprotected, hindering them from learning from experiences, described in this quote: "You are not allowed to work with the most urgent cases [...], so you never quite know how to react in real life when something even more extreme comes up."

### 2.2 Developing new networks

#### Creating job opportunities

The students described practice placement as a strategy for making connections and looking for potential job opportunities in the future. Learning through practice placement incorporated learning to create networks: "It could be that your plan is to go back to the lung department in a doctoral position, then practice [placement] was very important for making contacts."



## The role of improvisation

Creating networks for future job possibilities was described in musical terms to nurture relationships with others, explained by this participant:

It is about how we engage with that network, and how you treat those contacts afterwards. There might be a little musical improvisation in a way... that you can't just come and ask if you can get a job very braggingly. You must be dynamic in a way it as relational interaction, you must be humble in a way.

## 3.0 Challenges with practice placement

### 3.1 Feeling side-lined

#### Lack of integration

The lack of integration of practice placement components into the study programme was raised as a concern. Some participants suggested that the university programme should focus more on preparing the students before their first practice placement and that being put in a situation where they were out of their comfort zone felt like “being a fish on dry land,” as one of the participants said.

#### Lack of supervision in how to engage in interdisciplinary teams

One of the challenges with placements was described by the participants as the lack of possibilities for being included in an interdisciplinary team and a lack of supervision from the programme, illustrated by this quote from one of the participants: “The challenge is that if you do not receive training in how to work in an interdisciplinary team, you can quickly be sidelined.” Furthermore, to avoid the feeling of being sidelined, one of the participants proposed that the students should not only stick with the practice teacher during placement but, rather, try to get involved as much as possible with other professionals at the workplace.

### 3.2 Lack of a broader teaching model

This subtheme concerns participants' reflections on how the programme lacked a broader teaching model, which risked students becoming too narrowly focused. For example, one of the participants felt that too much focus on the musical aspects of music therapy could be limiting and reduce the possibility of wider understanding and reflected in the following way: “Because you may have a lot of focus on the musical, that is something that is a disadvantage.”

#### The need for a wider range of knowledge

One of the students felt that the programme's teaching did not cover the full picture regarding interdisciplinary knowledge and skills: “It's fair enough that you have a specialist skill, but at the same time, there should be a wider range (of knowledge) because otherwise, you might even feel that you are being left side-lined.” Another participant felt that they lacked the counselling skills they needed for practice: “Conversation technique, that was something I felt was lacking in practice and

you are thrown into things that you don't feel confident in doing." This lack of confidence seemed to create a sense of uncertainty and a lack of understanding of what was needed in certain situations: "I thought about it afterwards, that I need more training in how to ask and answer questions."

### Learning from other disciplines

Some participants said the programme should review their learning models to encompass learning from other disciplines: "If we only adopt the psychology models, then we won't be able to bounce back and forth in the same way."

### Supervising the supervisors

One of the students explained that the programme should facilitate more supervision for practice placement supervisors, and furthered: "Those who are internship supervisors should simply get a kind of introduction to supervision [...] everyone should have some sort of insight when you are a supervisor."

## DISCUSSION

We continue with a theoretical discussion based on the empirical findings from a sociocultural perspective. In summary, our study has revealed that practice placement plays a crucial role in the music therapy master education programme at UiB. Current and past students in the programme have emphasised the importance of this readiness for future work, including the ability to establish networks, collaborate with professionals from other fields, and address challenges that arise during practice placement. Participants expressed that confidence in practice is vital for developing a professional identity, which often stems from effectively navigating unexpected situations. Additionally, participants reported meaningful experiences for both themselves and their clients during practice placement, fostering a sense of achievement and belief in their ability to make a positive difference. Practice placements offer students the opportunity to apply learning and skills from the programme and facilitate the development of professional competencies such as communication and teamwork. The benefits of practice placement include gaining hands-on experience, developing skills and knowledge, learning from experienced professionals, and building professional networks, which can significantly impact future employment prospects. However, our study highlights that practice placement is a nuanced and complex subject, requiring multifaceted solutions as there is no one-size-fits-all approach to WBL.

Our findings are consistent with those of previous qualitative studies on students' experiences of practice placement, which have highlighted both the positive and negative (Beyers et al., 2022; Lim & Quant, 2017; Seah & McFerran, 2015; Wheeler, 2002). These studies showed that students can develop their music therapist self during practice placement and learn how to navigate different clinical situations. We view the student's placement experience as their transition from being less to more experienced. Throughout this transition, students require support from both their fellow students and the programme team for mentorship and guidance. We understand that students' networking efforts involve maintaining close contact with familiar individuals and actively seeking out new connections, leading them to encounter new people and emerging contexts. Developing new

networks is an important avenue for creating work opportunities upon graduation. Indeed, a survey of graduates' employment from the University of Limerick, Ireland (Kelly & Moss, 2022) revealed that 34% of students continued to work in their final placement setting after qualifying. According to Byers and Meadows (2022), who frequently observed that students felt misunderstood by non-music therapist team members, our study underscores the importance of supporting students navigating work settings where music therapy may be less well understood.

## Practice placement as learning through work

Our study underscores the significance of placement learning tailored to networks beyond the academic programme and highlights specifically the transition from university learning to practice situations. WBL, as discussed in the introduction, focuses on generating new integrative knowledge to tackle complex real-world issues. This knowledge emerges from dealing with the 'messy' complexities of real-life problems and is inherently emergent and complex. As some participants in our study noted, it is also not always a comfortable process. In Norway, music therapists are employed in diverse areas where increasingly challenging situations occur. Recent job market shifts require newly qualified music therapists to be prepared for a broader spectrum of work. This shift creates new demands for music therapy education providers (Halås & Fuhr, 2020). The expanding employment opportunities for music therapists, particularly within the mental health sector, including child protection and substance abuse treatment, underscore the evolving contexts for practice placements. Consequently, music therapy programmes must adapt to remain aligned with these developments in the field.

## Creating new identities and navigating perspectives

Participants reflected that their music therapist self is being formed through their practice placement learns. According to Wenger (1998), apprenticeship learning involves establishing connections within professional networks and contributes to constructing a new identity. The study revealed that practical experience is crucial for students to learn new terminologies and participate in new ways. Wenger defines identity as a negotiated experience within a community where individuals define themselves through their participation. Expanding on this, it is essential to nurture individual trajectories so that students can develop their own approach as music therapists. Students need a supportive environment with thoughtful colleagues and supervision to practise, innovate and lead. Becoming a music therapist involves engaging with multiple communities of practice. As students navigate various contexts, each community will contribute to their development. Wenger emphasises that learning occurs not only within separate communities but also between overlapping and interrelated ones, described as the nexus of multi-membership, as described in the following way:

The job of brokering is complex. It involves processes of translation, coordination, and alignment between perspectives. It requires enough legitimacy to influence the development of a practice... It also requires the

ability to link practices by facilitating transactions between them, and to cause learning by introducing into practice elements of another. Toward this end, brokering provides a participative connection. (p. 109)

Brokering, as described by Wenger (1998), is a complex process involving translation, coordination, and alignment between perspectives. The interviews conducted for our study showed that students gained practical experiences which were valuable for future connections. As one participant noted, maintaining humility in interactions was important for preserving relationships post-placement, as these connections could be beneficial for future employment. Although dated, Granovetter's (1973) concept of "the strength of weak ties" (p. 1360) remains relevant for this view. According to Granovetter, weak ties, characterised by lower levels of intimacy, trust, and emotional intensity, can be more useful than strong ties in career development. Weak ties, such as a brief encounter with a lead practitioner or researcher, can provide access to new information, resources, and opportunities. In the trajectory from the programme to the job market, weak ties can facilitate access to new professional networks and offer different perspectives. However, strong ties such as friends, colleagues or peers still play a significant role. As we have learned, the interplay between strong and weak ties matters when graduates look to the professional job market.

## Implications for practice

Based on the findings from this study, we present the following implications for the programme at UiB and others that have a similar structure. Firstly, professionals from other disciplines should collaborate with the programme through teaching or research. One example that could be drawn on is the Practice-Academic Home Framework fostered at Queen Margaret University Edinburgh. This framework enables exchange between practitioners, educators, and service users so that there is easier movement between practice and university. Such a collaboration in a community of co-learning, education and knowledge exchange allows, for example, practitioners to undertake research and academic staff to continue practice. Secondly, as we have seen narrated by the participants in this study, students regarded the role of placement supervisor as key to their support and learning but also appreciated being allowed to work autonomously and discover for themselves. Following this line of thinking, the programme team needs to support each student and pay close attention to their individual learning processes. Regular supervision is essential to this. A third suggestion is to ensure supervisors from other professions are invited to supervise music therapy students. Such interdisciplinary learning is essential and can also support the growth of employment possibilities.

## Limitations of study

This study has limitations that are important to consider. As outlined earlier, participants in both focus groups knew the facilitator. As this was not an external facilitator but someone from the programme, it may have influenced how they spoke about their experiences with practice placement. There were also limitations in how we interpreted and discussed the findings. We chose to follow

certain ideas and subjects more than others and engaged in the discussion with a sociocultural perspective, choosing language connected to that discourse.

## Suggestions for future research

This study has only revealed a small part of an issue we believe is worth continuing to explore. Following the needs outlined in the Bologna Process (Schomburg & Teichler, 2011), we need to learn more from both students and staff on how to facilitate WBL optimally to prepare students for the future. Firstly, further research could include longitudinal studies to track music therapy students' evolving perspectives and experiences over the duration of their academic programmes and into their professional careers. What happens with the students after five, ten, or fifteen years? Do they stay in the profession or find other paths? Secondly, we suggest undertaking comparative analyses between music therapy students and other practicing professionals such as nurses or social workers. It would be interesting to learn from the differences, similarities or challenges faced with PBL. Thirdly, we suggest adopting student-centred approaches to explore other relevant issues such as research collaborations, policy development, stakeholder ownership, and transdisciplinary. According to the Bologna Process, University programmes should listen to and prioritise student feedback. Our study aligns with this, as the aim was to assess a central component of the programme at the UiB. Future research should regard the students as key stakeholders whose perspectives are essential in assessing the programme's quality (Matthews & Dollinger, 2023).

## Concluding reflections

This qualitative focus group study was grounded in the belief that the Norwegian education system requires research to glean insights from students both during and after their university education programme. Despite being conducted within a Norwegian context, we believe this study holds relevance for other music therapy training programmes and their PBL. Drawing on the findings of this study, it appears pertinent to further explore how students can access the job market, aligning with the overarching goal of higher education, as outlined by international policy recommendations.

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## Ελληνική περίληψη | Greek abstract

## Μια ανοιχτή πόρτα στην αγορά εργασίας; Αναστοχασμοί φοιτητών μουσικοθεραπείας για την πρακτική άσκηση στη Νορβηγία

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### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Αυτή η μελέτη διερευνά τη μετάβαση από τη μάθηση στο πανεπιστήμιο στη μάθηση σε ένα εργασιακό περιβάλλον μέσω της πρακτικής άσκησης. Η μελέτη διεξήχθη στο Πανεπιστήμιο του Bergen (UiB), το οποίο προσφέρει ένα πενταετές πρόγραμμα στη μουσικοθεραπεία. Η πρακτική άσκηση είναι ενσωματωμένη σε όλα τα επίπεδα του προγράμματος, ξεκινώντας με την παρατήρηση της μουσικοθεραπείας και προχωρώντας σε πρακτική άσκηση όπου οι φοιτητές εργάζονται πιο αυτόνομα. Ο στόχος αυτής της μελέτης ήταν να μάθουμε από τις εμπειρίες των φοιτητών που συμμετείχαν στο πρόγραμμα, καθώς οι απόψεις τους είναι ζωτικής σημασίας για την ενημέρωση του περιεχομένου του προγράμματος. Η ερώτηση



μας ήταν: Πώς οι φοιτητές του πενταετούς ενσωματωμένου προγράμματος μουσικοθεραπείας στο UiB αναστοχάζονται σχετικά με τις εμπειρίες τους από την πρακτική άσκηση και πώς μπορούμε να κατανοήσουμε τους προβληματισμούς τους από την οπτική της μάθησης μέσω εργασιακής εμπειρίας; Για να διερευνήσουμε αυτό το ερώτημα, πραγματοποιήσαμε δύο ομάδες εστίασης, με πέντε φοιτητές η καθεμία. Ακολουθώντας μια θεματική ανάλυση των δεδομένων, αναπτύχθηκαν τρεις κύριες θεματικές ενότητες και έξι υποθέματα: 1. Ανάπτυξη ταυτότητας ως μουσικοθεραπευτή (1.1 Απόκτηση επαγγελματικής ταυτότητας, 1.2 Εύρεση φωνής σε διεπιστημονικές συναντήσεις), 2. Μια ανοιχτή πόρτα στην αγορά εργασίας (2.1 Μάθηση από την εμπειρία, 2.2 Ανάπτυξη νέων δικτύων), και 3. Προκλήσεις σχετικά με την πρακτική άσκηση στη μουσικοθεραπεία (3.1 Αίσθημα περιθωριοποίησης, 3.2 Έλλειψη ευρύτερου μοντέλου διδασκαλίας). Οι θεματικές ενότητες, οι οποίες βασίζονται στα εμπειρικά στοιχεία, συζητούνται από κοινωνικοπολιτισμική σκοπιά, αντλώντας από έννοιες όπως η μαθητεία, η κοινότητα πρακτικής και οι αδύναμοι δεσμοί. Αυτό το άρθρο κλείνει αναλογίζοντας επιπτώσεις για την πράξη και προτάσεις για μελλοντική έρευνα.

## ΛΕΞΕΙΣ ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ

εκπαίδευση μουσικοθεραπείας, πρακτική άσκηση, ανώτατη εκπαίδευση, μάθηση μέσω εργασιακής εμπειρίας, κοινωνικοπολιτισμική θεωρία