

Assessment of Types of Learning Engagement Which Contribute to Integrative Learning in Music Therapy

Amber Tappe, Jansa Zaldarriaga, and Lee Anna Rasar

Department of Music and Theatre Arts at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Abstract

This project examined student reports of their own engagement in integrative learning across the Fall 2010 semester. Students provided descriptions of how they made connections and specified which types of connections were useful in the processes of metacognition, reflection, and self-awareness. Students explained how they demonstrated intentionality when problem solving, directing their own therapeutic work, and making connections across theory, practice, disciplines, and in specific contexts. Furthermore, reports included the methods that students use to acquire learning and the evaluation of the implications of choices they make on their professional life and society as a whole.

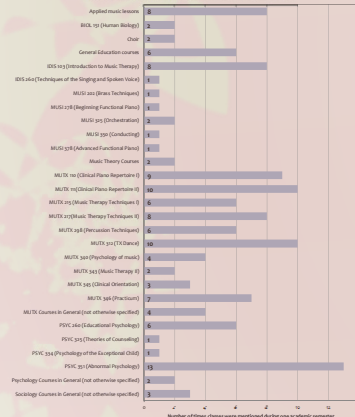
Methodology

This study took place across the Fall 2010 academic semester at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire with nine music therapy students in clinical courses participating. Every week each student completed a survey to describe any engagement in integrative learning across the previous week. The same surveys were used for the entire study. At the end of the study, students were asked as a group to reflect on different aspects of integrative learning and its applications.

Classes Mentioned

Although students were not asked which classes they specifically integrated into their learning areas, every student mentioned classes, as illustrated below.

Classes Mentioned in Integrative Learning Survey



Interpretation of Data

Table 1
Interdisciplinary and Cross-Theory Connections

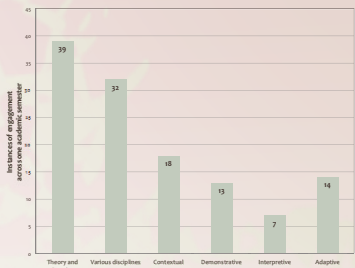


Table 1 shows the frequency with which students reported using interdisciplinary and cross-theory connections, including connections made between theory and practice, connections across disciplines, contexts in which connections were made, demonstration of these connections, and interpretation and integration of these connections. The most frequent connections noted were students applying what they had learned in classes to their clinical work. Students also reported using information from one class and applying it in another class, i.e. using skills learned in a public speaking class to give a presentation in a different class. The contexts in which connections were made included personal life, creativity, music therapy sessions, and employment.

Table 2
Intentionality

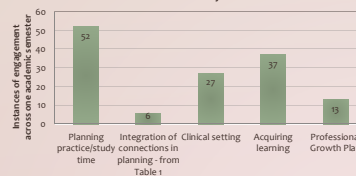


Table 2 represents the intentionality of students in designing and following through with their own learning processes to develop professional growth plans, create session plans and evaluate clinical work, and plan and assess effectiveness of musical practice as well as their own evaluations of how they pursue their education as individuals. Students described attending or participating in music therapy events that were not required for courses (conferences, presentations – both attending and presenting themselves, and serving as volunteers in nursing homes and hospitals), saving session plans to be used in the future, practicing and using improvisation skills where applicable, integrating goals for graduation and internship preparation with coursework, integrating specific music therapy techniques learned in classes (such as lyric analysis), manipulating knowledge learned in classes to meet clients' specific needs, and building up a portfolio as a personal resource. Students demonstrated intentionality by creating written and mental plans for meeting long term deadlines and practice goals, planning on a daily basis to meet goals, using specific memorization and learning techniques to learn songs quickly and effectively, working ahead, and evaluating what things were not working for them. Students asked for feedback from supervisors and adjusted goals, tailoring them to make improvements in weak areas first.

Table 3
Methods of Acquiring Learning

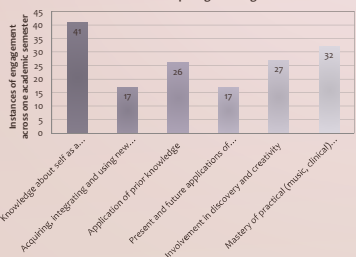


Table 3 represents the frequency with which students reported using different methods for acquiring learning. Knowledge about self as a learner and how one approaches different academic tasks, strategies and methods for acquiring, integrating, and using new knowledge, application of prior knowledge, present and future contexts in which new information can be applied, involvement in discovery and creativity, and empowerment in learning by mastery of intellectual and practical (music, clinical) skills were included. There were a large number of responses for knowledge about self as a learner and how one approaches different academic tasks. A recurring theme was learning in layers, referencing the scaffolding structure of building upon the foundational pieces by adding one layer at a time. Students also stated that they tend to do better with academic tasks in which they are interested or care about, or that they can apply to their lives. The majority of responses also included how to apply knowledge for use in the clinical setting by using prior knowledge to be creative to meet goals in sessions and incorporate music and non-music components in sessions.

Table 4
Application of Connections in Non-Academic Contexts

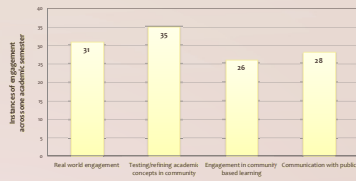


Table 4 shows students' frequency of reported application of knowledge through real-world engagement, testing and refining of academic concepts in the community, engagement in community based learning across the curriculum, and communication with the public. There were a fairly similar number of responses for each of these categories. Responses included using knowledge in personal life, to teach others, and to integrate into employment and volunteering. Community settings largely included clinical placements, but also included presenting at conferences, employment, and volunteer work. In classes that had an element of community-based learning built into the course, students reported feeling more successful with techniques taught in that class versus techniques taught in classes that did not include using the techniques in the community.

Table 5
Dialectical Reflection

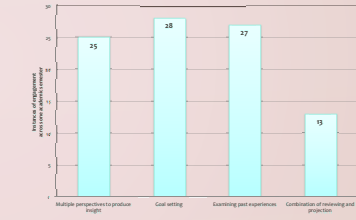


Table 5 includes students' reported frequency of putting multiple perspectives into play with each other to produce insight, goal setting, examination of past experiences, and combination of reviewing and projection. Responses included using viewpoints of self, supervisor, professor, other students, and other professionals to produce insight, reflection on sessions from week to week, use of material from past classes, and reflection on past experiences before making future decisions. Students also mentioned using the past as a starting point for goals in clinical work, while still being flexible to change goals in the future as new information/experiences arise.

Table 6
Metacognition

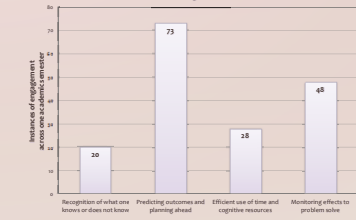


Table 6 represents total numbers of times that students identified using metacognition during the fall 2010 academic semester. Ability to predict outcomes and plan ahead far outweighed any other aspect of metacognition, as well as any other component of integrative learning. Students mentioned the creation of a professional growth plan and the necessity of creating treatment plans as the biggest factors affecting the planning component of metacognition. Some students also mentioned creating assessments, anticipating client responses, and developing effective measurement techniques for client responses as contributors. Many students mentioned using knowledge from previous classes as well as observations during sessions to change session routines to better meet client needs, change vocabulary use to be clearer, change physical seating arrangements, using specific instruments, ask for advice, pay attention to responses over time, and develop mock sessions.

Table 7
Self-Awareness

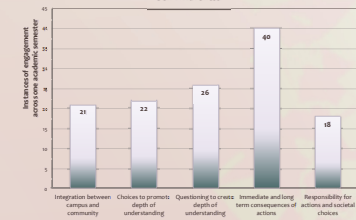


Table 7 represents students' awareness of the short and long term effects of both their actions and societal choices as well as acceptance of responsibility for choices and resulting consequences. In recognizing the consequences of their actions, students made changes in behavior or were intentional about their choices by building relationships with clients before performing their assessment (in a clinical setting), anticipating possible reactions to changes within the session, evaluating the long term effects of therapy, and recognizing the consequences of getting behind in academic work. In evaluating their own self awareness, students described formulating questions for their professors or supervisors, posing questions to self in order to evaluate effectiveness of sessions, anticipating questions from the public about music therapy and asking questions of clients to help them achieve depth during sessions. Students also mentioned awareness in balancing personal and academic life, budgeting time based on changes in their personal lives, and incorporating the development of foundational music therapy skills into personal life in creative ways.

Discussion of Results

Surveys and discussion questions indicate that students are aware of their own learning styles and use this awareness to create effective study and practice methods which they ultimately use in real world applications, thereby demonstrating retention of knowledge. Results also indicate that students use information they have learned in music settings, general academic areas, and personal life within various disciplines and apply this information to their clinical work with a large variety of populations. Students indicated extremely high levels of understanding consequences of their decisions, monitoring effects of treatment to problem solve, planning ahead and predicting outcomes. Discussion of these areas show that these high levels can be attributed to the type of clinical work in which music therapy students engage, which in turn forces them to use all available resources that they have accumulated during their academic career. The study also indicated that students have a clear understanding of methods of acquiring learning that work best for them as individuals and use this information in practicing, studying, and planning for how to do these things most effectively.

When results of surveys completed weekly during the Fall 2010 academic semester were compared with recorded discussions on topics from the survey at the end of the semester, a much higher use of integrative learning was reported during recorded discussion. If a similar study were to be done in the future, a discussion type of setting may provide more accurate results. Some discussion with students at the end of the semester indicated that there were times when they did not mention use of integrative learning in their surveys because they assumed it was evidenced by their clinical work.

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