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New wine in old bottles: Aligning curricula, pedagogy and assessment through creative practice in music

Dr Annie Mitchell

“New wine in old bottles” investigates the alignment of curricula, pedagogy and assessment in the Music Education major of SCU’s Bachelor of Contemporary Music degree through case studies of four assessment artefacts embedded in creative practice in music.

Students aspiring to careers as secondary school music teachers require vocational skills in music performance, ensemble direction, composition, arranging and aural perception. “Old bottles” refers to classical music theory, aural training, composition, conducting and performance traditions that underpin contemporary music composition, arranging, musicianship, ensemble and educational practices. “New wine” is the contemporary repertoire and strategies used to teach these skills, assessment instruments and processes measuring the acquisition of curriculum learning objectives, and their alignment to national creative and performing arts threshold learning outcomes. Case studies include the composition of a fugue or sonata, performance of a fugal arrangement of “Eleanor Rigby”, performance of an SATB choral arrangement of “Angel” and orchestration of “Arthur’s Theme”.

Student responses richly inform this research. In addition to formal student feedback on each unit, the class undertook a school practicum where they applied knowledge and skills gained from these curricula, then had the opportunity for self and peer assessment by reporting their findings in a focus group. This research was recently presented at the AiM: Assessment in Music Symposium (Queensland Conservatorium of Music) and has been accepted as a book chapter in Assessment in Music (Springer Publications).

Benchmarking the assessment of clinical reasoning in osteopathic curricula

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Benchmarking between educational institutions is a vital component of quality assurance and contributes to greater consistency and quality in teaching and learning practices. The investigation of clinical reasoning in osteopathy has only recently begun to be explored in depth. Benchmarking builds confidence in our education practices and processes and demonstrates a maturing of the osteopathic academic profession.

The aim of this project was to benchmark assessment of clinical reasoning across the final two years of the clinical components of four osteopathic programs. Learning objectives and clinical assessments from the final two years in each of the four programs were analysed to identify the types and frequency of assessments and the degree of alignment between learning objectives and
Bloom’s taxonomy. The communication strategy included online and face-to-face discussions and focus groups. Representatives came from Southern Cross University, Australia, Victoria University, Australia, Unitec, New Zealand and the British School of Osteopathy, UK.

All institutions assess clinical reasoning a variety of ways; one of which is the assessment of student’s actual performance during real-time, in-situ clinical consultations; the assessment of simulated performance; clinical supervisors’ reports; and oral or written reports on simulated case studies. There was some variance in the scaffolding of teaching/learning and assessments when compared to Bloom’s hierarchy. A general consistency was identified across the institutions with regard to the types and frequency of assessments used to assess clinical reasoning. In the final two years of the programs showed variability in the alignment of learning outcomes with higher levels of Bloom’s taxonomy.

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Attuning and enhancing assessment: Comparing competencies required for professional practice across allied health disciplines

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Assessment is integral to determining students’ competence to graduate and enter professions as safe practitioners. Australia’s workforce for allied health professionals outlines ‘entry level competency standards’ and ‘core scope of practice’ for allied health professions. In 2013, speech pathology and podiatry were added to the existing allied disciplines of osteopathy, exercise physiology and occupational therapy offered as tertiary courses through the School of Health and Human Sciences at Southern Cross University. The expanding suite of allied health courses provided an opportunity for a collaborative initiative and the potential to complement existing discipline specific assessments, through the construction of an attuned, valid tool, applicable across allied health disciplines. The intention was that such a tool would enhance teaching, learning and assessment and equip graduate allied health professionals for complexities inherent in profession specific and interdisciplinary workplaces. A review of the literature was conducted and an appraisal made of measurement tools used by different disciplines to assess students’ readiness for clinical practice at entry level into a particular profession. An exploration was conducted on how clinical practice competencies are construed and assessed across a range of allied health fields. This presentation focuses on processes and outcomes of the investigation, similarities and differences, what each discipline foregrounds and a sketch of an envisioned attuned assessment tool.

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