



LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

AlfredHealth

# “Being absorbed in the environment..it’s just so beneficial” - the experiences of physiotherapy students in situated learning pilot study

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## Introduction

Practice based education is often associated with clinical placements in entry-level health professional courses. However, practice-based education encompasses more than clinical placements. It includes fostering new partnerships between university and health services<sup>1</sup>. Through health-care based professionals’ engagement in the delivery of non-clinical learning activities within the clinical environment, this study explores the experiences of students completing a model of practice-based learning in a new partnership between university and hospital sector.

## Results

Three inter-related themes emerged from the analysis.

### 1<sup>st</sup> theme

Meaning making is enhanced by the relevance and authenticity afforded by immersion in a practice-oriented classroom environment.

Being taught by a clinician allowed students to understand the relevance of what they learnt and made direct links to their development as a physiotherapist.

“but this was more like a window that you could look in and see like this is reality, like this is what’s actually going to happen for real” [Student 22 -T1]

### 2<sup>nd</sup> theme

Learning from those in practice challenges students professional and academic accountability.

Students in this model were more aware of their professional behaviours and felt the need to impress the health-care based health professionals.

“I don’t muck around as much as I do at uni because of that feeling that you’re in the, you know, you’re in a hospital. You’re surrounded by people that could potentially be your employers or your colleagues of some sort makes you act different.” [Student 28 – T1]

### 3<sup>RD</sup> theme:

New educational infrastructures influenced students in unanticipated ways

Students found the lack of infrastructure frustrating at times. This also led to students recognising the need to be more prepared for classes.

“..mainly it’s access to facilities. At [the healthcare site], we don’t have Wi-Fi access so in- in the classroom situation, you can’t just look up information.” [Student 1 – T1]

## Impact on Allied Health

- Despite reporting development of positive attitudes towards independent learning, these changes were often short-lived.
- Health-care based professionals involved in this form of teaching should reflect upon their approaches in teaching and how they can balance between work orientated standards and transforming student’s capacities

### References:

Higgs J. (2011). *Practice-Based Education: A Framework for Professional Education*. Sydney: Australian Learning and Teaching Council.

For project details, please refer to Barradell, S., Blackstock, F., Tang, C., & Leo, J. (2017). "Being absorbed in the environment.. it's just so beneficial"- the experiences of physiotherapy students in situated learning pilot study. *International Journal of Practice-based Learning in Health and Social Care* (accepted)

