

**SPECIAL ISSUE**

Music, drama, dance movement and art therapy: Interdisciplinary dialogues

Article

The initial stage of the professional identity development of an arts therapist: The example of Latvia

Elīna Akmane & Kristīne Mārtinsone

ABSTRACT

This article explores the issue of professional identity development of an arts therapist within the context of Latvia. One hundred and eighty-five participants were invited to take part in the research and to fill in the questionnaire electronically – 118 certified arts therapists and 67 arts therapies students of all four specialisations. The questionnaire was completed by 101 participants (51 certified arts therapists, 50 arts therapies students). In addition, five focus groups were arranged including certified arts therapists and arts therapies students. As a theoretical basis this research uses the professional identity development model by Berliner (1994) which distinguishes five stages and levels according to duration of the professional activity and the accumulated work experience. The objective of the study was to find out which factors are forming the professional identity of an arts therapist, and also explore factors influencing the professional identity development of an arts therapist. This study explores what helps and what hinders the arts therapist's professional identity development process. This research and the acquired results can be used to form or improve the training of arts therapists. These conclusions could be used for better supporting trainees' personal and professional development and in reviewing approaches to supervision by foreseeing possible difficulties while creating the support systems.

KEYWORDS

art therapist, professional identity, development, Latvia

Mg. sc. sal. **Elīna Akmane** certified art therapist. Latvian Art Therapy Association board member. Works at Children's Clinical University Hospital, Children's Psychiatry Clinic, Latvia.

Email: akmane.elina@gmail.com

Dr. Psych. **Kristīne Mārtinsone** associate professor at Rīga Stradiņš University and Head of Department of Health Psychology and Pedagogy at the Faculty of Public Health and Social Welfare. Certified art therapist, supervisor and psychologist; establisher of the professional Master's study programme "Arts Therapies" in Rīga Stradiņš University, Latvia.

Email: k.martinsone@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The profession of an art therapist – as an independent healthcare profession – is relatively new in Latvia, therefore, professionally educated art therapists¹ still have to demonstrate their abilities in the labour market, as well as maintain the image of the profession and strengthen their professional identity (Karkou & Mārtinsone 2010; Mārtinsone 2010; Paiča, Mārtinsone & Karkou 2013). According to information provided by the Latvia Music Therapy Association (Paipare, personal communication, 16th June 2013), Rīga Stradiņš University (Mārtinsone, personal communication, 14th June 2013) and the Latvia Art Therapy Association (Mihailova, personal communication, 14th June 2013) there are 118 certified arts therapists² in Latvia at the moment – graduates of Riga Stradiņš University (73), Liepāja University (44) and Goldsmiths University in London (1) who work in healthcare, social care and education spheres, as well as in the private and state sectors in four specialisations – visual plastic art therapy (VPAT), dance and movement therapy (DMT), music therapy (MT) or drama therapy (DT).

The formal arts therapies³ education in Latvia started in the academic year 2003/04 with the professional study programme "Music Therapy" in the Liepāja Pedagogical Academy (now Liepāja University). In the academic year 2006/207 Riga Stradiņš University (RSU) launched the professional Master's programme "Arts Therapies". Within its framework the future arts therapists began their studies in three specialisations – VPAT, DMT, MT and starting from the academic year 2007/08, DT.

According to the enrolment requirements of the RSU (enrolment requirements of the RSU professional Master's programme "Arts Therapies")

¹ In Latvia an art therapist regardless of any of the four specialisations one represents (visual plastic art therapy, dance and movement therapy, music therapy or drama therapy) works under a single job title – *art therapist* (The Professional Standard of Art Therapists 2010). The term "art therapist" used in the research comprises art therapists of all four specialisations (visual plastic art therapy, dance and movement therapy, music therapy and drama therapy).

² Information as at the research writing period. In 2014, 12 art therapists graduated from the RSU.

³ The term "arts therapies" used in the research comprises all four arts therapies' specialisations (visual plastic art therapy, dance and movement therapy, music therapy and drama therapy).

people with different academic and personal experience choose to study arts therapies (in specialisation) – those who have a medical, healthcare, social care, pedagogics or arts degree. After completing their arts therapies studies the graduates receive the professional Master's degree in healthcare and arts therapist's qualification with specialisation in one of the types of arts (visual plastic art, dance and movement, drama or music (The Medical Treatment Law; The Professional Standard of Arts Therapists 2010).

In the last decade it has been topical to investigate the professional identity development among medical students (Wilson, Cowin, Johnson & Young 2013; Wear & Castellani 2000). It has been pointed out that the professional identity development – the way a healthcare professional thinks of oneself as a professional, feels oneself working in this profession – is as important as developing skills and acquiring knowledge in the study process. An intentional understanding of oneself in context of the professional identity is also connected to a successful career in the chosen profession.

There are several models from which to view the professional identity development. This research uses the professional identity development model by Berliner (1994) which distinguishes five stages and levels according to duration of the professional activity and the accumulated work experience. This model was initially designed to view the professional identity development of students (Dreyfus & Dreyfus 1980); later it was used to view the professional identity development of nurses (Benner 1984, 2004). Despite Berliner's model being designed for describing the professional identity development of those working in the field of pedagogics, it can be adapted to understand the professional identity development of other professions; as the above mentioned model shows the identity development process as a continuous and gradual process that begins with educating an inexperienced beginner until one reaches the highest level of development.

Berliner (1994) begins his model with the 1st stage – *the novice stage of development* that includes acquisition of the profession and the initial period of professional activity. The 2nd stage – *the advanced beginner stage of development* characterises professionals with a one to three-year work experience. Beginners who reach the 3rd stage – *the competent stage of development* – become competent in their field in the third or fourth year of working. The 4th stage – *the proficient stage of development* is reached in the fifth year of

working and professionals who have reached the 5th stage – *the expert stage of development* – are free in their performance and act without an obvious effort.

This model was chosen as a basis to distinguish between the professional identity development stages of an arts therapist. In addition to the five levels and stages set forth by the author the *0 level* should also be mentioned. It includes the process of profession choice that is also a significant factor of professional identity formation. While examining the scientific literature on the professional identity development of healthcare professionals, it is obvious that the professional identity begins to form itself a while before commencing studies when one's future profession is just considered (Kroger 2007; Skorikov & Vondracek 2011). Studies indicate that medical students laid foundations to the choice of their future profession before they commenced their studies by deciding whether to study in a particular study programme (Wilson et al. 2013). So the *0 level* includes the stage before starting studies, in this case the time when an individual decides to study arts therapies (in specialisation).

The novice stage of development. When attributing this model to the professional identity development of an arts therapist it should be mentioned that the *novice stage of development* is represented by arts therapies students during their studies while they are acquiring knowledge and getting to know new professional spheres. The professional identity development is significantly influenced by acquiring the particular profession's studies and learning process (Mann, cited in Wilson et al. 2013: 370). Other authors agree (Mārtinsone et al. 2008; Moon 2003). This level is also represented by arts therapists who have just finished their arts therapies studies and started their professional activity in the field of arts therapies.

2nd stage: The advanced beginner stage of development. One to three-year experience. This level includes those arts therapists who have received the medical practitioner certificate (Certification procedure of medical practitioners 2012).

3rd stage: The competent stage of development. Arts therapists with a four-year work experience who have reached the competent stage of development can start their supervisor training that is co-ordinated with the ANSE standards for national organisations (Association of National Organisations for Supervision in Europe).

4th stage: The proficient stage of development; and *5th stage: The expert stage of development.* These levels are mainly characterised by intuition and free performance resulting from the accumulated experience; these levels are represented by arts therapists and supervisors who have worked in their profession for more than five years.

These development stages show the professional identity development as a gradual process that is based on the duration of the professional activity and accumulated work experience. They show how the understanding of situations and the ability to foresee changes in the course of development occur by acquiring knowledge and expanding professional expertise.

The research objective was to investigate what are the affecting factors of an arts therapist's professional identity development and to determine what promotes and what hinders the professional identity development process of an arts therapist.

In order to reach the goal, research questions were defined: 1. What are the influencing factors of the professional identity development of an arts therapist? 2. What promotes and what hinders the professional identity development factors of an arts therapist?

RESEARCH METHOD

Instruments

- 1) An individual electronic external questionnaire for arts therapists and arts therapies students that included various questions related to their professional activity and development (e.g. Have you acquired further continuing professional education after graduating as an arts therapist? How long after you graduated from the "Arts Therapies" programme did you began to work as an arts therapist? What workload do you have as an arts therapist? In what environment do you currently work as an arts therapist? etc.). This article analyses only questions 29-31:
 - 29. What factors influence your professional identity development as an arts therapist?
 - 30. What helps you in your professional development while becoming an arts therapist/developing as an arts therapist?
 - 31. What hinders you in your professional development while becoming an arts therapist/developing as an arts therapist?

- 2) Five focus groups including certified arts therapists and arts therapies students.

Participants

One hundred and eighty-five participants were invited to take part in the research and to fill in the questionnaire electronically – 118 certified arts therapists and 67 arts therapies students comprising the four specialisations. The questionnaire was completed by 101 participants (51 certified arts therapists, 50 arts therapies students who studied arts therapies in either RSU or Liepaja University, including six arts therapies students who are currently on sabbatical leave). 13 certified arts therapists and 19 arts therapies students participated in the focus group discussions. All focus group participants were divided into subgroups based on the gradualness of their professional identity development, according to the duration of their arts therapies studies and accumulated professional experience.

Procedure

One hundred and eighty-five electronic mail messages with an invitation to take part in the questionnaire and a brief information sheet on the research were sent out. The participants filled in the questionnaire online (www.visidati.lv) between 1st and 31st of October 2013. The questionnaire was designed in a way that participants had to answer to all questions without leaving any out.

Five focus groups were arranged (I, II, III, IV and V). Nine 1st, six 2nd and four 3rd year students of the RSU programme "Arts Therapies" were invited to participate in focus groups I, II and III on a principle of voluntary participation. While in focus groups IV and V, 13 certified arts therapists were involved – participants of the RSU continuing education course "Supervision". Discussions of all five focus groups (with the consent of all participants) were filmed.

Data analysis and results

To answer the first research question the focus group discussions were analysed as well as data acquired from the 29th question of the questionnaire ("What factors influence your professional identity development as an arts therapist?").

The content analysis strategy – grounded theory that sets several consecutive steps – was used for data analysis (Cropley 2002; Strauss & Corbin 1998). First, a transcription of the focus group

discussions was carried out while performing the formal data coding by assigning each of the participants a code comprising of the number of the focus group and participant's serial number in the course of discussion (for example, F1-4). Then, using the building-block approach (Cropley 2002), a content analysis on factors affecting the professional identity development indicated by the focus groups' respondents was performed and they were grouped in more general categories. When giving the categories general titles the most typical categories of the particular sphere were used that included factors of similar significance; for instance, *previous education, previous background, past experience, one's own basis, life experience, one's own experience, professional experience, etc.* and these were combined in one category and generalised as "Previous experience". Twenty-three categories were formed as a result of the content analysis. A list of general factors influencing the professional identity development was obtained which, in turn, was used for further classification of factors by analysing the qualitative data from the 29th question of "The Questionnaire for Arts Therapists and Arts Therapies Students".

When performing the content analysis of the 23 categories, general category spheres were acquired. Firstly, when creating general titles for different spheres, arts therapists' professional identity development affecting factors' spheres were considered; for instance, "Arts therapies studies, acquired knowledge", "Practical professional activity", "Relationship" (with colleagues, teachers etc.), "Previous experience", "Individual development and continuing education" and "Profession of an arts therapist". Secondly, after taking into consideration results obtained during the content analysis, new spheres were created, for example, "Inner factors" and "External factors".

While performing the content analysis of the qualitative data acquired from the 29th question of the questionnaire, the professional identity affecting factors were grouped in the previously created factor categories. As the respondents more than once have indicated the answer *hard to tell* or have not answered the question, two more categories appeared – "Hard to tell" and "No answer" as well as one new category sphere – "Hard to tell/No answer".

The content analysis and questionnaire results combined to create 25 categories and 9 category spheres (Table 1).

When examining the answers' analysis results (Table 1) of the 29th question of the questionnaire it

is obvious that the most frequently mentioned factors that influence the professional identity development of an arts therapist are related to the category "Practical professional activity" (13.88%)

No.	Category spheres	Category No.	Factor categories	Frequency of the category appearance (%) in the questionnaire (n=101)	Frequency of the category appearance (%) in focus groups				Frequency of the category appearance (%) in total (n>101)
					Focus groups IV and V (certified arts therapists) (n=13)	Focus group I (1 st year students) (n=9)	Focus group II (2 nd year students) (n=6)	Focus group III (3 rd year students) (n=4)	
I	Arts therapies studies	1	Studies, acquired knowledge	11	10.79	19.15	11.11	14.29	12.41
		2	Higher education institution	0.95	1.96	-	11.11	-	1.42
II	Practical professional activity	3	Practical activity	13.88	9.81	-	-	19.06	9.57
		4	Participation in supervisions	6.22	5.88	-	-	19.05	4.26
		5	Certification	0.48	0.98	-	-	-	0.35
III	Relationship	6	Colleagues	5.74	5.88	10.64	7.41	9.52	5.32
		7	Teachers	6.22	3.92	14.89	18.52	9.52	5.67
		8	Supervisor as a personality	0.48	2.94	-	-	4.76	2.13
		9	Participation in an association	1.44	4.9	2.12	7.41	4.76	3.19
		10	Guest lecturers	0.96	4.9	-	-	-	1.77
IV	Previous experience	11	Other authorities	0.48	-	-	-	-	1.06
		12	Previous experience	6.22	9.81	19.15	18.52	4.76	8.87
V	Personal growth and continuing education	13	Continuing education	11	8.82	6.38	-	-	8.87
		14	Individual therapy	7.66	1.96	4.26	7.41	-	5.32
		15	Creative activity	2.39	-	4.26	-	-	2.13
VI	Profession	16	Profession's situation in LV	1.44	-	12.77	3.7	-	2.13
		17	Explaining the profession to others	0.48	4.9	-	3.7	-	2.13
VII	Internal factors	18	Personality characteristics, emotions	11.96	0.98	-	-	-	8.51
		19	Feeling oneself	-	15.69	-	7.41	4.76	6.74
		20	Goal, vision	-	5.88	-	3.7	9.52	3.19
		21	Enthusiasm of the 1 st year student	-	-	6.38	-	-	1.06
		22	Moral satisfaction	0.95	-	-	-	-	0.71
VIII	External factors	23	Family, environment	4.78	-	-	-	-	3.19
IX	Hard to tell/no answer	24	Hard to tell	4.31	-	-	-	-	3.22
		25	No answer	0.96	-	-	-	-	0.72
Total				100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Table 1: Categories of factors forming the professional identity of an arts therapist

This includes any practical activity within the profession, including both the study praxis during studies and further professional work with clients/patients while working in the profession. The next most frequently mentioned factors were a range of psychic conditions and personality characteristics – for example determination, interest, urge to help, willpower, patience, persistence, dutifulness, diligence etc. – that were all summarised in the category "Personality characteristics, emotions" (11.96%). An equally high number of participants also considered factors in the categories "Studies, acquired knowledge" (11%) and "Continuing education" (11%) as important. Studies and the study process include all answers related to the acquisition of knowledge, including individual reading of literature. The continuing education includes participation in master classes, workshops, courses, professional and personality growth groups

Figure 1 shows only those factor categories where frequency of the mentioned factors is more than 4%. All factors mentioned in the questionnaire are summarised in Table 1.

When analysing data of focus group I it was concluded that the 1st year students' enthusiasm helps them (willingness to acquire new knowledge, huge interest about the process and urge to

participate) and that this was also reflected in their responsiveness when they were invited to participate in the focus group. The most important factors mentioned by this focus group can be included in the following categories – "Studies, acquired knowledge" (19.15%), "Previous experience" (19.15%), "Teachers" (14.89%) as well as "Profession's situation in Latvia" (12.77%). These factors point to the actual situation of the 1st year students as they are related to the initial phase of studies and their topicalities – adapting to the higher education institution and getting used to the study process, becoming acquainted with teachers as well as with authorities related to the profession, their recent past experience and the legal situation of the profession in Latvia.

Participants of focus group II mentioned several times during the discussion that they felt a certain confusion, indicating that at the moment they do not feel any professional identity or have a student identity. The most important factors that currently influence the professional identity development indicated by the named focus group can be attributed to the following categories – "Teachers" (18.52%), "Previous experience" (18.52%), "Studies, acquired knowledge" (11.11%), as well as "Higher education institution" (11.11%).

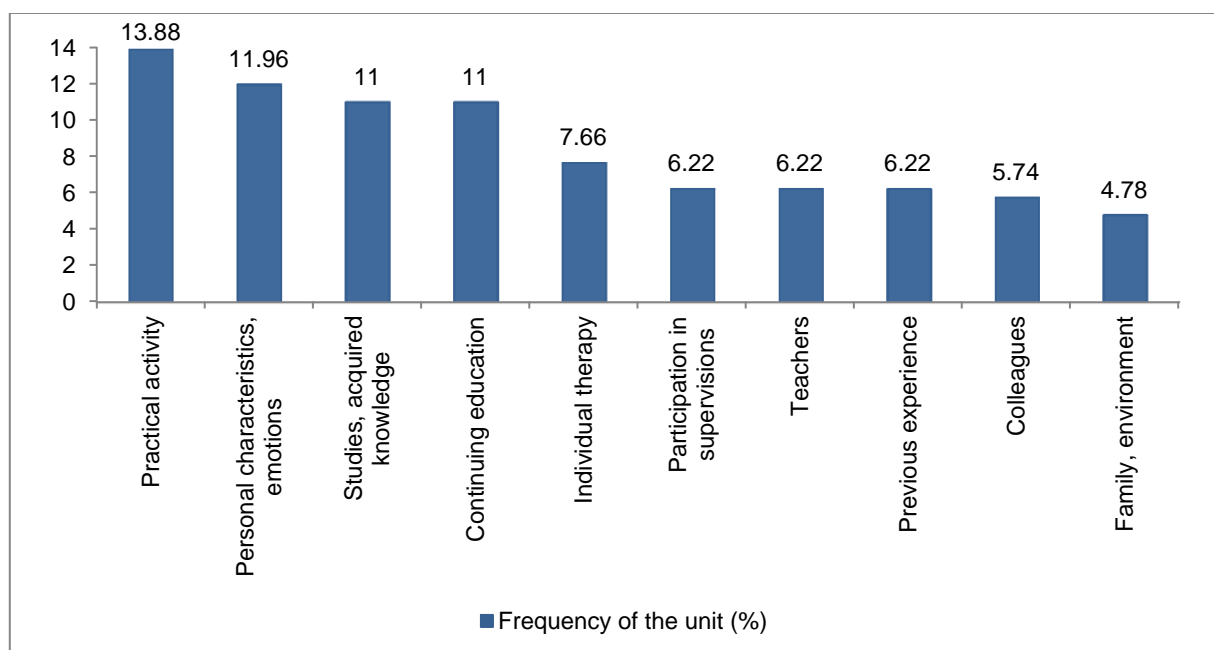


Figure 1: Factors influencing the professional identity development of art therapists (n=101)

These factors points to the actual situation of the 2nd year students as they are related to the intense study process. In this phase of studies, students mostly communicate with their teachers and get support from them; therefore, one of the most

frequently mentioned factors influencing the professional identity development is teachers. It can be concluded that in the second study year the professional identity crisis forms – the 2nd year students feel confused in their sense of

professional identity. It would appear that some part of the previous identity is lost and a new professional identity is created. This is at a time when students also gain an intensive placement experience.

The 3rd year students of arts therapies study programmes were the participants of focus group III. This focus group faced resistance to participate in the research. The number of participants was low and answers to the questions were short. It may be that this was influenced by the fact that the discussion moderator and research author was a student of this course and students were actively involved in writing their Master's thesis. Although the discussion was not extended it can be concluded from the received answers that the most important factors influencing the professional identity development go under the category "Practical professional activity" – "Practical activity" (19.06%) that includes practical activity both during the study praxis and within the framework of research done for the Master's thesis, as well as "Participation in supervisions" (19.06%). Both of these important factors point to the actual situation of the 3rd year students as in this semester they undertake research related to their Master's thesis through carrying out professional activities with clients/patients. During this time students also visit supervisions where they get significant support for carrying out their research.

Data of focus groups VI and V were analysed together after transcription as they were organised according to the aquarium principle and participants of the same level took part in these focus groups, namely, certified arts therapists with a work experience in the arts therapy professions. When analysing these materials it is obvious that arts therapists during the discussion and when discussing factors that influence their professional identity development often mentioned concepts related to their *inner feelings*, for instance, *getting to know oneself; filling one's inner world; feeling of being liked; inner process; strengthening the inner feeling*. Along with other more frequently mentioned factors that influence the professional identity development of an arts therapist, such as: "Studies, acquired knowledge" (10.79%), "Practical professional activity" (9.81%), "Previous experience" (9.81%), factors related particularly to the category "Inner feeling" were mentioned the most (15.69%). The participants indicated several times that their professional identity development is an *inner process* and "the house of professional identity" *is built internally*.

While interpreting results of this focus group, it

can be concluded that certified arts therapists who during their professional development have graduated from their arts therapy studies, and by a professional activity have gained work experience in an arts therapy profession, have most frequently named those factors which, during the content analysis, were placed under the category's "Personal growth and continuing education" sphere "Feeling oneself". This points to the actual situation of participants from this focus group, namely, that studies are finished, experience is gained by working in the profession and now it is the time and opportunity to think of one's inner feeling – "this profession is "my profession"", "this is what I want to do". This makes these arts therapists think of how they feel themselves as arts therapists, how they integrate the arts therapist within themselves.

Arts therapies students named several external factors as the ones influencing their professional identity development – *studies, acquired knowledge, teachers, participation in supervisions*, etc. While certified arts therapists mentioned the inner factor as the main one influencing their professional identity development – *the inner feeling*. From the above it can be concluded that during the process of acquiring a profession several external professional identity factors are important, while the *inner feeling* indicated by certified arts therapists shows that arts therapists, along with gaining experience from professional activity, also gained a feeling of professional identity.

In order to answer the second research question, focus group discussions were analysed, data acquired from answers to questions 30 (What helps you in your professional development while becoming an arts therapist/developing as an arts therapist?) and 31 (What hinders you in your professional development while becoming an arts therapist/developing as an arts therapist?) were gathered and analysed.

First, taking the building-block approach as a basis, the content analysis on factors that arts therapists mentioned as helping their professional identity development was performed; factors were grouped in categories and category spheres of factors influencing the professional identity development of arts therapists designed in the first steps of the data analysis. Five previously created category spheres were retained; however, some categories were slightly changed. For instance, the categories "Certification", "Other authorities" and "Feeling oneself" were taken out as they were not topical in relation to the helping factors. The categories "Individual reading of literature", "Availability of the professional literature" and

"Work in a multidisciplinary team" were added to the list. The new categories were assigned general titles and these included factors of various importance, for instance, *reading of literature, profound theory acquisition, literature, reading of the professional literature, literature studies, literature sources, information, professional literature and periodicals, self-education, etc.* that were all combined under one category and generalised as "Individual reading of literature". In total, nine category spheres and 25 factor categories were retained (Table 2).

As the end of focus groups' VI and V video material was "lost" due to technical problems. Response data on the second question (What helps and hinders you in your professional development while developing as an art therapist?) are valid only partially, namely, only the first part of this question is recorded that includes answers on factors that help arts therapists in their professional identity development process. Data on factors that hinder arts therapists in their professional identity development process is incomplete; therefore, it is not included in the research analysis.

When viewing analysis results of the 30th question (Figure 2) it is obvious that the most frequently mentioned factors that help arts therapists in their professional identity development process are from the category "Continuing education" (17.05%). In addition, category "Practical activity" (12.79%) including any practical professional activity is mentioned as an important factor for the professional development; and

"Colleagues" (12.02%) including co-operation with colleagues, their support as well as sharing experience with other colleagues.

Figure 2 shows only those factor categories where frequency of the mentioned factors is more than 4%. All factors mentioned in the questionnaire are summarised in Table 2.

When viewing the helping factors for each focus group (Figure 3) it can be concluded that for the 1st year students the most important factor in their professional identity development process is "Colleagues" (28.58%). For the 2nd year students the legal situation of the arts therapist profession in Latvia is important (42.86%). For the 3rd year students, however, participation in supervisions is the most frequently mentioned (45.45%) as the helping factor. Certified arts therapists named "Continuing education" (22.22%) as the most important factor in their professional identity development process.

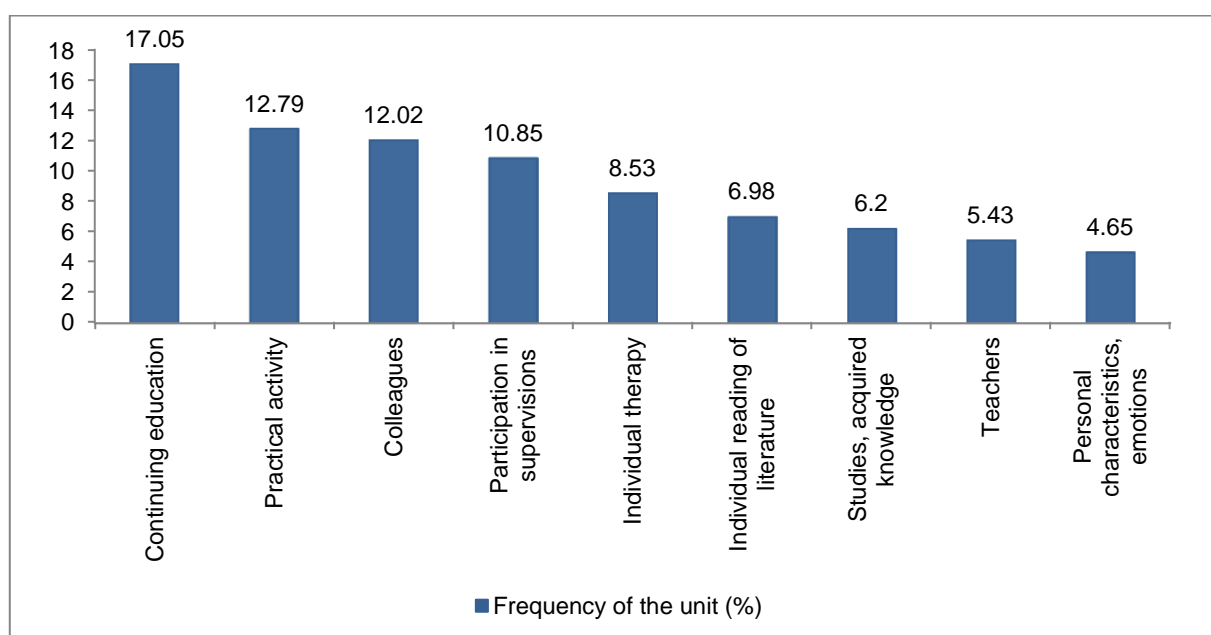


Figure 2: Factors that help in arts therapist's professional identity development process (n=101)

No.	Category spheres	Category No.	Factor categories	Frequency of the category appearance (%) in the questionnaire (n=101)	Frequency of the category appearance (%) in focus groups			Frequency of the category appearance (%) in total (n>101)
					Focus group I (1 st year students) (n=9)	Focus group II (2 nd year students) (n=6)	Focus group III (3 rd year students) (n=4)	
I	Arts therapies studies	1	Studies, acquired knowledge	6.2	-	-	-	5.39
		2	Availability of literature	1.55	4.76	-	-	1.68
		3	Individual studying of literature	6.98	14.29	-	-	7.07
		4	Higher education institution	0.78	-	-	-	0.67
II	Practical professional activity	5	Practical activity	12.79	-	-	9.09	11.45
		6	Participation in supervisions	10.85	-	-	45.45	11.11
III	Relationship	7	Colleagues	12.02	28.58	-	27.27	13.47
		8	Teachers	5.43	9.52	14.29	18.19	6.4
		9	Supervisor as a personality	0.39	-	-	-	0.34
		10	Participation in an association	1.16	-	-	-	1.01
		11	Work in multidisciplinary team	0.78	-	-	-	0.67
		12	Guest lecturers	1.55	-	-	-	1.35
IV	Previous experience	13	Previous experience	1.52	-	-	-	1.35
V	Personal growth and continuing education	14	Continuing education	17.05	-	-	-	14.81
		15	Individual therapy	8.53	4.76	14.29	-	8.08
		16	Creative activity	2.71	-	28.56	-	3.03
VI	Profession	17	Situation of the profession in LV	-	9.52	42.86	-	1.68
		18	Explaining the profession to others	0.39	-	-	-	0.34
VII	Inner factors	19	Personal characteristics, emotions	4.65	9.52	-	-	4.71
		20	Goal, vision	0.78	-	-	-	0.67
		21	Enthusiasm of a 1 st year student	-	14.29	-	-	1.01
		22	Moral satisfaction	0.39	-	-	-	0.34
VIII	External factors	23	Family environment	2.33	4.76	-	-	2.36
IX	Hard to tell/ NA	24	Hard to tell	0.39	-	-	-	0.34
		25	No answer	0.78	-	-	-	0.67
Total				100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Table 2: Categories of the helping factors in the professional identity development of an arts therapist

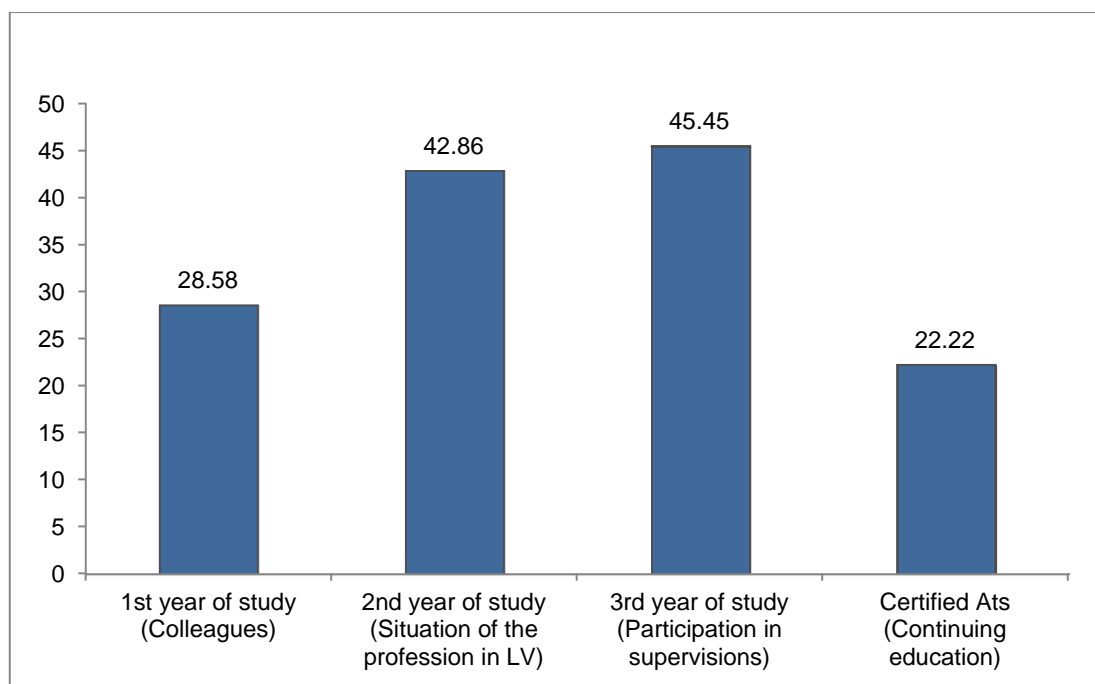


Figure 3: The most frequently mentioned factors that help during the professional development process of an arts therapist (unit frequency % in each focus group), data of focus groups I, II, III, IV and V (n=32)

To answer the second part of the second question (what hinders an arts therapist in his/her professional development process) a content analysis on focus group respondents mentioned troublesome factors were performed and they were grouped in general categories. When creating general category titles the most typical categories of the particular sphere including factors of similar importance were used, for instance: *family circumstances, living in a province, large workload simultaneously working and studying, lack of time, combining work and family lives, unarranged and deranged work environment, etc.* that were all combined under one category and generalised as "External conditions". Category 21 was created as a result of the content analysis and a general list of hindering factors was developed (Table 3).

When viewing the analysis results of the 31st question (Figure 4) it is obvious that the most frequently mentioned factors that hinder the professional identity development process of an arts therapist are under the category "Lack of finance" (23.08%). The category "Lack of awareness in society" (12.31%) was also mentioned as an important factor; it includes a sometimes negative attitude towards the arts therapies profession, lack of understanding, prejudice and resistance; and "External conditions" (11.54%) that include such hindering factors as living in a province, large workload, simultaneously working and studying, lack of time, combining work

and family lives, unarranged and deranged work environment, etc.

Figure 4 shows only those factor categories where frequency of the mentioned factors is more than 5%. All factors mentioned in the questionnaire are summarised in Table 3. When examining the hindering factors for each focus group (see Figure 5) it can be concluded that for the 1st year students the most hindering factor in their professional development process is "Lack of finance" (31.58%), for the 2nd year students an important hindering factor is "Stress and health problems" (50.00%). This data highlights the professional identity crisis of 2nd year students showing that students often experience stress and health problems during their second year of study. While the 3rd year students mentioned "Uncertainty about future" (18.18%), "External factors" (18.18%) and "The short period of study" (18.18%).

No.	Category spheres	Category No.	Factor categories	Frequency of the category appearance (%) in the questionnaire (n=101)	Frequency of the category appearance (%) in focus groups			Frequency of the category appearance (%) in total (n>101)
					Focus group I (1 st year students) (n=9)	Focus group II (2 nd year students) (n=6)	Focus group III (3 rd year students) (n=4)	
I	Arts therapies studies	1	Lack of knowledge	0.77	-	-	9.09	1.16
		2	Unavailability of literature	0.77	-	-	-	0.58
		3	Complaints about the study programme, teachers	7.69	-	16.67	9.09	7.56
		4	Study difficulties	1.54	-	-	-	1.16
		5	Short study period (2.5 years)		10.53	8.33	18.18	2.91
II	Practical professional activity	6	Little practical activity	3.07	-	16.67	-	3.49
			Low-quality/inaccessible supervisions	3.07	-	-	-	2.33
		7	Unemployment	3.07	-	-	-	2.33
III	Relationship	8	Lack of communication with colleagues	0.77	-	-	-	0.58
IV	Previous experience	9	Previous experience as a hindrance	-	10.53	-	-	1.16
V	Personal growth and continuing education	10	Lack of individual therapy alternatives	1.54	26.32	8.33	-	4.65
VI	Profession	11	Disarray of the profession in LV	1.54	-	-	-	1.16
		12	Lack of authority in profession	-	-	-	9.09	0.58
VII	Inner factors	13	Individual characteristics, emotions (e.g. anxiety, disbelief in oneself)	7.69	-	-	-	5.81
VIII	External factors	14	External conditions (family, lack of time)	12.31	-	-	18.18	10.47
		15	Lack of finance	23.08	31.58	-	9.1	21.51
		16	Uncertainty about future	3.85	5.26	-	18.18	4.65
		17	Lack of foreign language knowledge	3.85	-	-	-	2.91
		18	Uninformed society	11.54	15.78	-	-	10.47
		19	Stress, health problems	2.31	-	50.00	9.09	5.81
IX	Nothing / NA	20	Nothing hinders	7.69	-	-	-	5.81
		21	No answer	3.85	-	-	-	2.91
Total				100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Table 3: Categories that hinder the professional identity development of an arts therapist

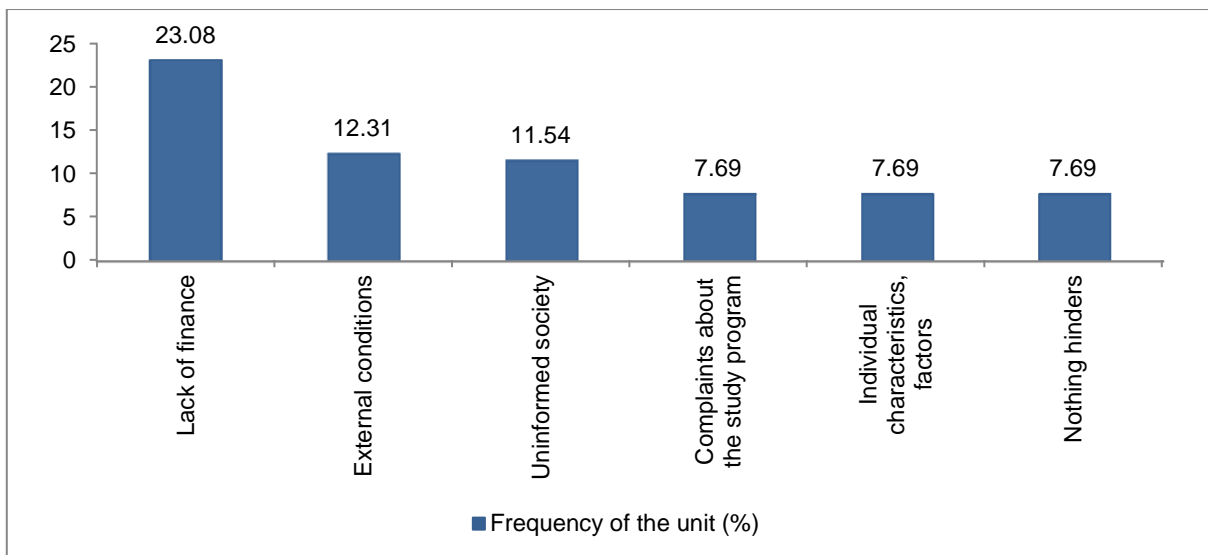


Figure 4: Factors that hinder the professional identity development process of an arts therapist (n=101)

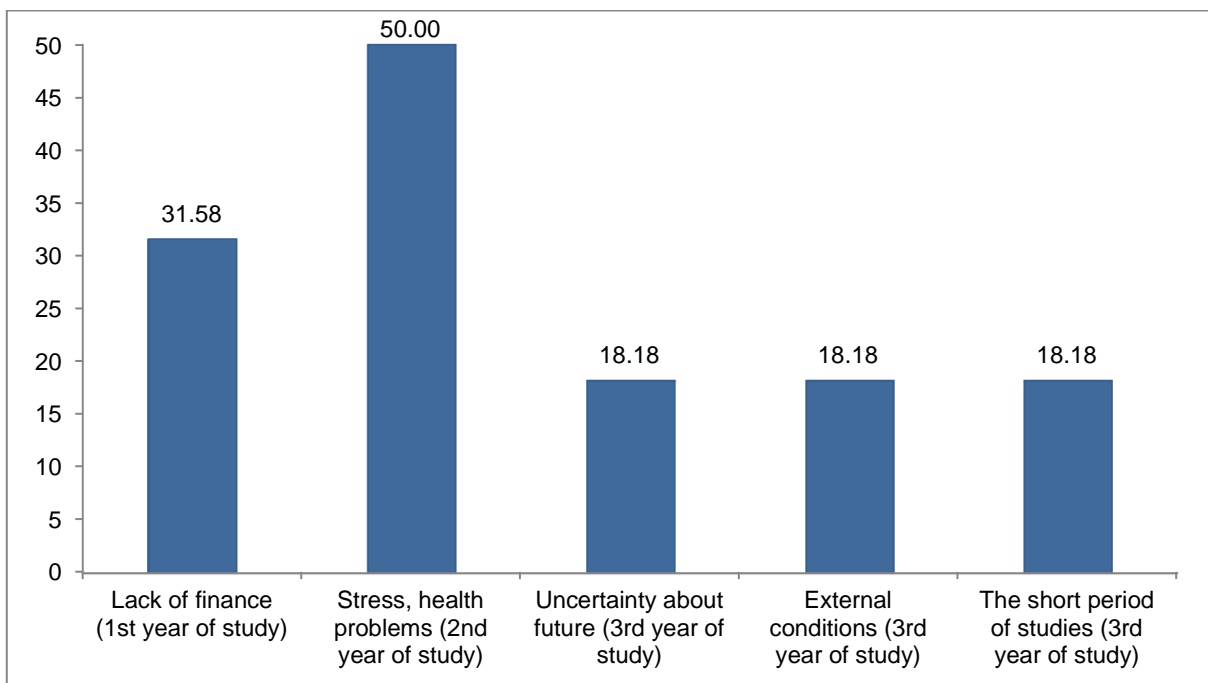


Figure 5: The most frequently mentioned factors that hinder the professional identity development process of an arts therapist (unit frequency in %), data of focus groups I, II and III (n=19)

CONCLUSIONS

1. The research results on the professional identity development of an arts therapist show that the professional identity development process of an arts therapist proceeds gradually beginning with studies, start of the professional activity by acquiring experience during the professional activity and during the time changing from external factors that influence professional identity to inner factors.
2. Factors influencing the professional identity

development of an arts therapist vary among arts therapists of different professional development levels, at the same time they reflect the current professional situation of each represented level.

3. The breaking point in the professional identity development process of an arts therapist can be observed in the 2nd year of study when a professional identity crisis and health problems appear. This aspect would require further investigation by performing, for example, a phenomenological analysis, which would also

deepen our understanding of the required support system for students.

4. During the process of acquiring the profession of an arts therapist the external professional identity influencing factors are more important; however, the inner factor – *inner feeling* – mentioned by certified arts therapists indicates that arts therapists along with their professional activity experience have reached a sense of professional identity as an arts therapist.

Research limitations

Arts Therapies and the profession of an arts therapist in Latvia are relatively new in comparison to the USA and United Kingdom where several arts therapists' generations have already developed their professional identity. In contrast, in Latvia those arts therapists who have been first to acquire this profession have a relatively small experience in arts therapies. As a result, a view into the development of the professional identity of an arts therapist through a perspective of experience gained in Latvia can be relatively narrow and limited. It would be useful to repeat this research in a more developed arts therapy context to discover whether similar or different 'conclusions' would be found using the same methodology, or perhaps its replication in Latvia in about three years' time.

Perhaps the insight into the professional identity development of an arts therapist would be more profound and extensive if the research included opinions of clients/patients on the impact of arts therapists on their lives! This could also be a significant aspect of identifying professional identities. This can be measured either through direct comments or by comments made to members of care teams, their referrals of other clients/patients to work with arts therapists, or even by indirect data such as attendance and punctuality.

Research significance

This research and the acquired results can be used to form or improve the training of arts therapists. These conclusions could be used for better supporting trainees' personal and professional development or in reviewing approaches to supervision by foreseeing possible difficulties while creating the support systems.

REFERENCES

- ANSE standards for national organisations (2013). Association of National Organisations for Supervision in Europe. Retrieved from <http://www.anse.eu/>
- Benner, P. (1984). *From Novice to Expert: Excellence and Power in Clinical Nursing Practice*. Menlo Park: Addison-Wesley.
- Benner, P. (2004). Using the Dreyfus model of skill acquisition to describe and interpret skill acquisition and clinical judgment in nursing practice and education. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, 24(3), 188-199.
- Berliner, D. C. (1994). Expertise: The Wonders of Exemplary Performance. In J. N. Mangieri & C.C. Block (Eds.), *Creating Powerful Thinking in Teachers and Students Diverse perspectives* (pp. 161-186). Fort Worth, TX: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Certification procedure of medical practitioners (2012). Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No. 943. Retrieved from <https://www.vestnesis.lv/index.php?menu=doc&id=253782>
- Cropley, A. (2002). *Qualitative Research Methods: An Introduction for Students of Psychology and Education*. Riga: Zinatne.
- Dreyfus, S. E., & Dreyfus, H. L. (1980). *A Five-Stage Model of the Mental Activities Involved in Directed Skill Acquisition*. Operations Research Center, University of California, Berkeley.
- Enrolment requirements of the RSU professional master's program "Arts Therapies" (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.rsu.lv/studiju-iespejas/magistra-studijas/studiju-programmas/makslas-terapija>
- Glaser B. G., & Strauss A. L. (1971). *Status Passage*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Karkou V., Mārtinsonē K., Nazarova N., & Vāverniece I. (2010). Art therapy in the postmodern world: Findings from a comparative study across the UK, Russia and Latvia. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 38(2), 86-95.
- Kroger J. (2007). *Identity Development: Adolescence through Adulthood* (2nd Edition). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Mākslas terapeita profesijas standarts (2008). Retrieved from <http://visc.gov.lv/profizqlitiba/dokumenti/standarti/ps0434.pdf>
- Mārtinsonē, K. (2010). Specifics of Supervision in Arts Therapies. In K. Mārtinsonē (Ed.), *Supervision and its Specificity in Arts Therapies* (pp. 118-119). Rīga: Drukātava.
- Paiča I., Mārtinsonē K., & Karkou V. (2013). The practice of arts therapies in Latvia: Findings from a nation-wide survey. *Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference "Arts Therapies: Realities and Prospects"* (pp. 67-75). Rīga: Rīga Stradiņš University.
- Skorikov, V. B., & Vondracek, F. W. (2011). Occupational Identity. In Schwartz, S.J., Luyckx, K., Vignoles, V. L. (Eds.), *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research* (pp. 693-714). New York: Springer.
- Strauss A., & Corbin J. M. (1998). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (2nd Edition). London: Sage Publications.
- The Medical Treatment Law (1997). Retrieved from <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=44108>

The Professional Standard of Art Therapists (2010). Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No. 461. Retrieved from <http://visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/ps0434.pdf>

Wear D., & Castellani, B. (2000.) The development of professionalism: Curriculum matters. *Academic Medicine*, 75(6), 602-611.

Wilson I., Cowin L. S., Johnson M., & Young H. (2013). Professional identity in medical students: Pedagogical challenges to medical education. *Teaching and Learning in Medicine: an International Journal*, 25(4), 369-373.

Suggested citation:

Akmane, E., & Mārtinsons, K. (2016). The initial stage of the professional identity development of an art therapist: The example of Latvia. *Approaches: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Music Therapy*, Special Issue 8(1), 12-25.