



Development of the Music Therapy Profession in Latvia

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ABSTRACT

Music therapy is a new profession in healthcare in Latvia. There have been some initial difficulties in the establishment of the profession in this country. The author has been actively involved since the beginning of the development of the Latvian Music Therapy Foundation. She has studied and taught on the Music Therapy programme in Latvia. She has also established and managed the Music Therapy Foundation and the Latvian Music Therapy Association. The author's personal experience, therefore, successfully portrays the academic and clinical development of music therapy in a European country where it is acknowledged as a medical profession according to the Medical Law of the Republic of Latvia.

KEYWORDS

music therapy; profession standard; healthcare

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In Latvia, music therapy is a relatively new form of healthcare and rehabilitation. It was established only 10 years ago but is already nationally approved. Approval was not easy to attain, which this article further describes.

(see Table 1).¹

Although elsewhere in Europe there are longstanding traditions in the training of music therapists, in Latvia this process commenced in 2003. However, this has successfully developed in

WHAT ARE THE KEY POINTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MUSIC THERAPY IN LATVIA?

Music therapy acquired legal status in Latvia in 2009; this was attained, therefore, relatively quickly. Thus, a professional music therapist is someone who has a Master's degree in healthcare and the qualification of an art therapist in music therapy

¹ In Latvia music therapists have an equivalent professional standard with art therapists. That is why the official qualification is: art therapist in music therapy. Similar qualifications are available for other art specialists in Riga's Stradina University (RSU): art therapist with specialisation in music or drama, dance and movement therapy or in visual plastic art.

a very short time, obtaining national recognition and inclusion in healthcare law.

HOW DID TRAINING PROGRAMMES EVOLVE IN LATVIA?

The first training programme of music therapy began in Liepajas Pedagogical Academy (now: Liepajas University) under the guidance of Reiner Hauss from Witten/Herdecke University (music therapist in Datteln Children and Youth Clinic, Germany). This training programme was similar to the one at the University of Witten/Herdecke in Germany. It included internship (39 ECTS or 1040 hours) and self-experience (240 hours). The forming of the programme helped to foster the growth of the profession as it was necessary to validate professional standards which the Liepajas University, teaching staff carried out with RSU in collaboration with doctors.

The process of validation lasted more than three years. Throughout this period the following institutions were involved: Liepajas University, the Ministry of Education and Science, and the Ministry of Health and Welfare. The Ministry of Health and Welfare was initially resistant to the approval of the term 'therapist'. This was finally achieved with the help of the President of the State and the German chancellor².

Since Latvia did not have professional teaching staff or associated professors in music therapy, the training was carried out by Hauss and external guest lecturers (see Table 2).

In 2006 the first 16 music therapists graduated from the Liepajas music therapy training programme. Furthermore, at this time the Master's training programme in art therapy started at RSU. Mirdza Paipare and Olga Blauzde, who were graduates from Liepajas University, were invited to work there. The programmes in both universities were offered on a full-time and part-time basis.³

At Liepajas University the programme was initially based on the Nordoff-Robbins approach to music therapy. At RSU, however, the founders were trained in psychology and a greater psychodynamic emphasis was observed. As time passed the training of music therapists became more integrative and eclectic.

2003: The first training course for music therapists in Latvia commenced at the former Liepaja Academy of Pedagogy (now known as Liepaja University, LiepU).

2003: Before the foundation of the Latvian Music Therapy Association and the implementation of a training programme, work in the development of a professional standard for music therapy had begun.⁴

2003: The professional standard development work group began its work and gained recognition.

2005: The Latvian Professional Association of Music Therapists (LMta) was founded. At this time the umbrella association of the Latvian Association of Arts Therapies also existed.⁵

2006: A training programme started in Rīga Stradins University (RSU).

2006: A joint standard for an art therapy specialist (of music and art therapies) was confirmed.

2006: The Ministry of Education and Science accepted the title of the profession – art/music therapy specialist.

2009: Professional standards were approved in the legislation.

2009: The Latvian Music Therapy Association was established in the Latvian Association of Rehabilitation Professional Organisations.

2010: The Law of Professional Qualifications and Required Education in Healthcare was supplemented.

2010: Art (music) therapy was registered as a medical technique.

2012: The title of art (music) therapist was included in Medical Treatment Law as a functional specialist.

Table 1: The most significant years in the development of music therapy in Latvia

² In 2005 Vaira Viķe-Freiberga and Gustav Schreoder raised the question concerning professional standards and validation due to the large financial support being given by the German counterparts to develop a training programme.

³ At RSU full-time studies take place each weekend. At Liepajas University part-time studies with six examination periods are offered between Friday and Wednesday.

⁴ According to Latvian legislation a training programme cannot be licensed and accredited if it does not meet professional standards.

⁵ Now Alliance of Latvian Art Therapy Associations (Latvijas Mākslas terapijas asociāciju apvienība, LMTAA).

Liepaja's University (LiepU)

Previously: Liepaja Academy of Pedagogy (1990-2008), Liepaja Pedagogical Institute (1954-1990).

Name of programme: music therapy.

Faculty of Pedagogy and Social Work

Grade: Master's degree in healthcare.

Part-time programme.

About 2000 students have enrolled.

Level of the course: Master's course, 6 semesters – 100 Credit Points=4000 hours.

1 CP=1,5 ECTP or 40 hours.

Director: Mirdza Paipare.

Teachers: Reiner Haus (D), Mirdza Paipare, Olga Blauzde and Līga Enģele.

Guest lecturers: Vilmane Aleksiene (LT), Jaakko Erkkilä, (FIN), Heidi Fausch-Pfister (CH), Indra Gutāne-Siener (A), Peter Hoffmann (D), Joseph Moreno (USA), Monika Nöecker-Ribaupierre (D), Esa Ala-Ruona (FIN), Tonius Timmermann (D), Tony Wigram (DK) and Ilse Wolfram (D).

Theoretical frame: The music therapy programme comprises 100 credits, including compulsory theoretical and practical study courses (40 CP), compulsory elective study courses (up to 58 CP) and elective study courses (from 2 CP); including development of a Master's thesis (20 CP) and placement (26 CP).

Riga Stradins University (RSU)

Name of programme: arts therapy.

Faculty of Rehabilitation

Grade: Master's degree in healthcare.

Full-time programme.

Level of the course: Master's course, 6 semesters – 100 Credit Points= 4000 hours.

1 CP=1,5 ECTP or 40 hours.

Director: Jana Duhovska.

Coordinator: Mirdza Paipare.

Teachers: Mirdza Paipare, Olga Blauzde, Sandra Barsineviča, Ineta Heinsberga and Inese Paiča.

Theoretical frame: The arts therapy programme comprises 100 credits, including compulsory theoretical and practical study courses (40 CP), compulsory elective study courses (up to 58 CP) and elective study courses (from 2 CP); including development of master's thesis (20 CP) and placement (26 CP).

Table 2: Overview of music and arts therapy training programmes

WHAT MADE THE COMMENCEMENT OF MUSIC THERAPY POSSIBLE IN LATVIA?

When Latvia gained national independence in 1991, the social system was fundamentally changed. Free flow of information was now possible. This, however, also required new skills and knowledge from the Latvian people. They had

to change their sense and understanding of the world and adapt to varying circumstances. They often had to search for recognition in new working environments and professions, adapt to a different style and pace of life, and become more open to innovations and aspects of competition.

This period of transition afforded many new possibilities; now there was hope whereas before there were restrictions. Yet, at the same time, there was also disappointment, loss, stress, new illnesses and social problems; inevitable characteristics during a time of transformation (Mārtinsone et al. 2008)

In addition, due to more openness regarding policy and care offered from other countries and individual enthusiasts, lesser known sciences and practices entered Latvia. This was also a time when the development of visual plastic art, and dance and movement therapies commenced.

Initially, representatives of different professional backgrounds from, for example, Germany, Switzerland, Great Britain, USA and Russia, offered seminars and training opportunities demonstrating how methods and techniques of music and visual plastic art therapies (defined hereafter in this text as 'art therapy') can be used by people from diverse professions (e.g. psychologists, teachers, social workers and doctors) in their professional work, self-development and study.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE OUTCOME OF COLLABORATION WITH ART THERAPISTS?

The music therapy association was founded in 2005 and became part of the Alliance of Arts Therapy Associations due to a reciprocal meeting of professional standards. Both then and now, the general recognition of art therapy by doctors was very important to us. The qualification of 'art therapist' can be obtained at the university (RSU) where the Head of the university is a medical doctor and where future doctors are trained.

In my opinion this was the main factor regarding the approval of the profession and its subsequent integration within healthcare. Currently music therapists and art therapists in Latvia share a code of ethics; likewise each association of music, visual plastic art, dance and movement, drama, and poetry therapies are members of the Latvian Association of Rehabilitation Professional Organisations. This has helped to advance the status of music therapy as a medical practice. In addition, close collaboration with doctors, rehabilitation specialists, physiotherapists,

occupational therapists and auditory speech therapists has confirmed the title of 'music therapist' in the law as a functional specialist.

Latvian Music Therapy Association	
Year of foundation	2005
Number of members	41 (2014)
Criteria for members	Qualified music therapist; Master's degree in music therapy programme.
Main goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> To support the health and welfare of the society and unite music therapists in Latvia. <input type="checkbox"/> To organise and coordinate the protection and promotion of the music therapy profession. <input type="checkbox"/> To develop collaboration with similar professional organisations in Latvia and throughout the world.

Table 3: Latvian Music Therapy Association

CONCLUSION

Looking back at what has been achieved, I do believe that the legal recognition of music therapy in Latvia represented a dynamic and intense moment in our history. The story of music therapy in Latvia could be called a story of luck; it was important to be in the right place at the right time. Music therapists are currently working, for example, at the National Rehabilitation Centre ("Vaivari"), Rigas, Jelgavas, Liepajas Psychoneurological hospitals, RSU University's clinical hospital "Gaiļezers" children ward and Rigas regional hospital's rehabilitation ward.

In Latvia music therapists are medical practitioners who, just like doctors and other medical workers, have to pass a certification in healthcare every five years.

Regardless of the status of the music therapy profession, there is still much to do. More information about the profession should be offered to the general public. Even now in our country there are diverse perceptions of music therapists and the work that they do. Many associate it with a music teacher or a psychologist who might ask a client to play, sing or listen to music.

A closer collaboration with service-user organisations should be established so that together we may address the objectives of music therapy with different client populations.

A SHORT SUMMARY

1. In compliance with professional standards, music therapists in Latvia can work in the fields of social care, healthcare, education, in private practice and organisations requiring the service of arts therapies (on an individual, group or organisational basis).
2. The Latvian Music Therapy Association has a close cooperation with the Latvian Arts Therapy Association, with which it has a common standard of profession, description of profession, and code of ethics.
3. A music therapist in Latvia is a professional with a medical education according to the Medical Law of the Republic of Latvia.

ART THERAPIST'S ACTIVITY REGULATING DOCUMENTS:

Laws and regulations of the Republic of Latvia (Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers):

- Art therapy medical technologies / (Rehabilitation medical services): www.vmnvd.gov.lv
- Art therapy professional association documents: www.muzikasterapija.lv
- Code of ethics: www.makslasterapija.lv
- Medical practitioner's certification order: www.akti.lv/naiser/text.cfm?Key=0101032012121800943&doknos=arstniecibas-personu-sertifikacijas-kartiba
- Professional standard: www.lm.gov.lv

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