

Paper presentation 1:

Educating art therapists – creating alternative avenues for hope

Mimmu Rankanen, Finland

This presentation is based on my personal experiences from over a decade of educating art therapists and collegial co-planning of all together four different art therapy and art psychotherapy programs for in Finland and Norway.

Developing art therapy education is always a challenge since it demands finding a successful balance between art and human knowledge. Learning in depth skills of creativity and art at the same time as integrating them with psychological and psychotherapeutic knowledge and sensitive human interaction sets us in a crossroad, where choice of spending time on exploring one avenue always leaves less time to familiarize with the other avenues. Furthermore, there is also a need to balance between focusing on learning to practice art therapy and/or learning to do research on art therapy.

I will use the four educations as case examples of how different the art therapy educations can be and what kind of contributions these different choices of can offer for society and for building the field and profession of art therapy. Each of these avenues has different possibilities for creating hope – hope growing from shared experiences of creativity and art-based practices, hope born from genuine moments of meeting in the middle of pain and suffering, hope rising from deeper understanding and more holistic healing of human mind, and hope of spreading the art therapy practices in different fields of society by developing convincing research.

Mimmu Rankanen is a professor of art therapy at the Department of Art, Design and Drama, Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway. She has long experience of teaching art therapy at the university level, she has presented her research at many international conferences, published multiple scientific articles and book chapters, and co-authored a book of art therapy. Her doctoral research (2016) focused on how client's experience the process and impacts of art therapy. She is also a state authorized psychotherapist, psychotherapy educator and supervisor, who has education both in cognitive analytic psychotherapy and art therapy in Finland. Her clinical practice includes long term clinical art therapy with adults suffering from various mental health problems. She led the first Supervisor and Trainer Program of Art Psychotherapy organized by the Association for Art Psychotherapists in Finland and is a scientific head of the professional Group Art Therapy Program at Roiha Institute. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2687-318X>

Paper presentation 2:

A Structured Observation Framework, Evaluating Clients' Inner Change During and After Art Therapy

Gärd Holmqvist, Sweden

The presentation will describe the development of a structured assessment instrument for observation of the client's inner change during and after art therapy. It is based on a previous study in which the concept of inner change was defined as a psychologically deeper permanent change, which differs from a more superficial, transient change (Holmqvist et al., 2017). In that study, 38 art therapists described, how they perceive an inner change in the patient. With an inductive thematic analysis of the therapists' descriptions, five themes emerged: attachment, creation, affect consciousness, self-awareness, and self-strength, which formed the basis for the construction of the assessment instrument.

In the construction of the assessment instrument, the five themes in the study have been deepened and explored in relation to theories of psychodynamic emotional development and art therapy practice. The final assessment instrument consists of five areas with sub-themes and three developmental stages in each sub-theme. The three stages of development are exemplified by observations from our own clinical work.

The assessment instrument is intended to be used by trained art therapists both in clinical practice and research. Hopefully the assessment will help art therapists to show the power of art therapy.

Gärd Holmqvist has an PhD in Health and Lifestyle from Halmstad University, a MSc in Art Therapy from Umeå University and is authorized Art Therapist according to Swedish Association of Art Therapists (SRBt). She started to work with art therapy 1977 in her basic education to occupational therapist, in München, Germany. Her first training in art therapy was completed 1978 by Anneliese Budjahn, Heidelberg. Gärd has here whole life worked with art therapy in adult psychiatric care, in Germany and Sweden. Her dissertation is about Art Therapy, inner change and improved health and she has published four articles on this subject. Since 2018 is she the chair of SRBt.

Paper presentation 3:

Problem-solving through the creation of drawings and stories to regain hope in a (post-)crisis context: the Art & Storytelling school-based program with vulnerable children.

Caroline Beauregard, Canada

The COVID crisis has led to multiple impacts on the well-being and mental health of families that could have long-term effects on children's development. In some households, the experience of ongoing uncertainty associated with the perceived lack of control over their life caused increased levels of depression and anxiety, which may have contributed to feelings of helplessness and hopelessness among family members. While this unprecedented situation has affected everyone, albeit to varying degrees, families from disadvantaged backgrounds could have been even more affected due to pre-existing health and social inequalities caused by unequal access to power and resources. In this context, school arts-based interventions aimed at restoring hope and a sense of agency in vulnerable children were appropriate initiatives to promote their well-being. Indeed, schools can offer children a space to express themselves in a stimulating and caring environment. Additionally, art making has been shown to foster creativity in times of crisis and strengthen children's sense of agency, which is necessary for developing a sense of hope.

This presentation is based on data collected during qualitative intervention research which aimed to explore how a school-based creative expression program (Art & Storytelling) fostered creativity and a sense of agency in vulnerable children in a (post-)covid context in Quebec (Canada). To illustrate how creativity and agency evolved throughout the program, the case study of a 7-year-old boy from a disadvantaged neighbourhood will be presented based on observation notes from art therapists, drawings and associated stories created by the child during the program as well as an interview with his teacher. The discussion will focus on problem-solving and on how artmaking helped him act more on his environment in his drawings and/or stories to protect himself or to adapt it to his needs in order to restore his sense of hope.

Caroline Beauregard, PhD, is professor of art therapy at the University of Quebec in Abitibi-Temiscamingue (Canada). Following doctoral studies in educational psychology on the identity expression of immigrant children in their drawings, she is currently conducting research on the contribution of school-based creative expression workshops on young immigrant's emotional well-being and socioemotional development.