Development of a Multidisciplinary Diploma on Art Therapy in Health Education – Research into existing practices in Tunisian Universities

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Abstract

Art theray is a discipline that involves the exercise of art. It has its own various applications, and it continues to evolve. Art therapy is a profession that uses artistic production to help people overcome emotional and psychological problems. It encompasses a broad spectrum of activities related to art, expression, and mental health care. This concept is multi-dimensional and requires deep knowledge in all facets of education. This article aims to provide an overview of the various efforts being made by art therapy project team. The goal of the HEALING project is to develop a multi-disciplinary diploma in Art Therapy for Health Education in Jordan and Tunisia. This will help establish Art Therapy Centers in each of the partner universities. Also, the HEALING project aims to promote the development of educational programs related to Art Therapy in Jordan and Tunisia. This project will develop an e-learning package that will enable Art Therapists to work with individuals with learning difficulties and other special needs. The study utilized qualitative methods to evaluate the experiences of the academic staff, students, stakeholders and the community partners. The results of these assessments were used to inform the development of service-learning courses in art therapy programs. It encourages the use of these techniques in order to improve the quality of education for art therapists. The survey aims to gather the opinions of the teaching board at selected schools in Jordan and Tunisia regarding the introduction of Arts Therapy. Following the results of the first phase, the various phases of the project will be carried out. In the next phase, the requirements for the art therapy center will be established. Also, it aims to create materials that will enable teachers and students to develop skills in how to use the arts in a therapeutic manner. It will also include art therapy, music therapy, drama therapy, and dance therapy. Practical courses and theoretical courses are offered at the Art Therapy Centers, while online courses are also available. The questionnaires for Market Needs Analysis were prepared, distributed and analyzed to determine the most appropriate skills, practical and training content to embed in the courses. Based on the results, 60 courses have been prepared in the field of Art Therapy. Each course is equivalent to 5 ECTS. The present paper examines the existing practices in Tunisian Universities.

1. Introduction

"Development of a Multidisciplinary Diploma on Art Therapy in Health Education – HEALING" is a project co-funded by the Erasmus+ Capacity Building for Higher Education programme with main objectives to develop a multidisciplinary diploma in Art Therapy in Health Education as well as to establish Art Therapy Centre in each partner university.

The HEALING project will represent and encourage the development of Arts Therapies education in Jordan and Tunisia. In particular, the project aims to design and develop a professional educational program (e-learning package) of Art Therapy for people with learning difficulties and disabilities that will enable all staff and students to work with patients with chronic conditions offering them arts-based therapeutic services.

Practical courses will be offered at the Art Therapy Centres while theoretical courses

will be offered online as e-courses. The Arts Therapy Centres will raise awareness of the role of arts therapy, raise the number of professionals in this field and it will offer individual, group, generic and tailored therapeutic services.

This research paper aims at assessing the current situation on Art Therapy in Education in Tunisian Universities, and to investigate the state of art, in order to work towards applying Art Therapy in Healing and Health Education. Preliminary analyses had already been done in the project's preparation phase, to define needs of each partner and set common objectives of the project. The in-depth analysis in this paper approaches the following aspects:

- Art Therapy in Education: Curricula Status
- Real competences to be developed

Three in-depth analyses are conducted by the means of desk research, paper and online surveys, interviews with appropriate stakeholders, including national enterprises, governmental bodies and education experts and advisers. The results of this in-depth analysis will be the starting point for the curricula development and the development of the art therapy centre.

The first in-depth survey on the state of the art of Art Therapy in Education investigates the current situation of the level of Art Therapy Education integration in current teaching and learning materials. The survey's aim is to identify the weaknesses and strengths in the curricula, verifying the courses offered, what to update and what courses are needed.

The second in-depth survey on Teachers and Students Competences and awareness aimed to examine the art therapy education usage habits and the self-assessed art therapy competencies of students in Arts and Health programs, as well as to investigate the level of competence and the needs of the teaching staff. This will allow us to identify the real art therapy education competences that have to be provided to

both target groups, to define the most competitive and highly valued situation and trends in art therapy education, as well as to determine the new digital technologies to be integrated within the new curricula. This will assist in reviewing, modernizing and designing the new teaching materials.

The third in-depth survey on available facilities and resources aimed at verifying partners' facilities in order to build on existing resources available in partner universities. The report will lead to a gap analysis, and a discussion of the needs in capacity building, infrastructure and human resources.

The results of these in-depth surveys are collected in this paper, which analyze the needs and the most appropriate skills, practical and training content to be embedded in the courses. The paper will contribute to the development of an innovative art therapy curriculum according to EU standards, and one that responds to the target group's needs.

The general aim of this scientific paper is to look into the following main aspects:
- Scoping the current situation on Art Therapy in Education
- Identifying the real competences to be provided to teachers and students
- Verify the facilities of partner universities in Tunisia

2. Methodology

Aims

This study aimed to assess the current situation on Art Therapy in Education in Tunisian Universities and investigate state of the art. Hence, this study is guided by the following research questions,

- What is the current situation on Art Therapy in Education at Tunisian universities?

- What are the required competencies to be provided to teachers and staff?
- What are the required competencies to be provided to students?
- What are the facilities of partner universities in Tunisia?

Design, sampling, and participants

Cross-sectional design was used in an online survey that was distributed on Tunisian staff, students and teachers, and stakeholders (including national enterprises, governmental bodies, and education experts and advisers) to assess the situation of art therapy. The package leader with the collaboration of work package co-leaders Irbid National University, University of Sousse, and representative participants from other participating universities including (Isra university, university of Jordan), developed the surveys' content and determined the target participants. This survey took place between May 2020 and 14 May with the following number of Tunisian participants (university staff (41); students (215); teachers (66); and stakeholders (16). Keep in mind that the number of participants exceeded the target number in each surveyed group.

Operational definitions:

Package leader; (UCLL)

Staff university; Deans/ chairman of department/professors from the universities

Students: Students from the universities (school of Arts / School of Medical Sciences/ other related schools)

Teachers: Teachers from the universities (school of Arts/school of Medical Sciences/ other related schools)

Stakeholder: Art Therapy – Stakeholders, people working in relevant companies or centers (Graduated art therapists, hospitals, medical Centre, therapists, art therapists)

Measures and data collections

The study used an online survey using google forms, since it is the most convenient method in terms of accessing the participants. Five surveys were used (Staff survey, students survey, teachers survey, and stakeholder's surveys) and the following paragraph provides a brief description about the surveys used:

1. Staff's survey which aimed to make an assessment of the current curricula and e-learning facilities at school of Arts / School of Medical Sciences/ other related schools with a target number of 10 participants.
2. Student's survey aimed to identify which competencies in Art Therapy students already have (self-assessed) and which competencies they still lack (based on the newest trends and methodologies in art therapy). With a target number of 30-100 participants.
3. Teacher's survey aimed to identify which competencies in Art Therapy teachers already have (self-assessed) and which competencies they still lack (based on the newest trends and methodologies in art therapy). With a target number of 10-25 participants.
4. Stakeholder's survey to identify which competencies in Art Therapy teachers and students already have (self-assessed) and which competencies they still lack (based on the newest trends) with a target number of 5-10 participants.

First of all, all surveys were developed in the English language (source language). However, as the mother tongue language in Tunisia is French, the surveys were translated in the French language (target language).

3.   Results

3.1 State-of-the-art on Art Therapy

The aim of this survey is to make an assessment of the current curricula and e-learning facilities at school of Arts and/or school of Medical Sciences at the partner universities. The survey was targeted at deans or professors from the Tunisian partner universities. A total of 20 Tunisian HEI (Higher Education Institution) representatives completed the first survey on current curricula in art therapy education and experience in e-learning.

A.   The current curricula in art therapy education

The University of Gabès and the University of Sfax don't offer any courses related to Art Therapy. At the University of Sousse, the majority of respondents responded that there are courses related to Art Therapy at their institution (music therapy, music psychology and psycho-cognition). This indicates that most respondents are aware of these courses and that they are well established at their university. Finally, , the large majority of respondents believe that there is more need for Art Therapy courses at their university.

B.   Experience in and facilities for e-learning

The survey examined the extent to which e-learning is already applied in the participating universities/departments. E-learning is learning done by studying at home using computers and courses provided on the internet. At the University of Gabes, only 1 respondent was not aware of the presence of e-learning at their department. At the University of Sfax, 4 respondents or 30% was not aware of e-learning. Most striking is the response for University of Sousse, where 66% of the respondents indicate that e-learning is not present at their department. This is an indication that forms of e-learning are not yet fully implemented at this institution. E-learning is already used in the departments, mostly in the form of learning through online platforms. Online face to face meetings through online meetings software

is the second most used form of e-learning. The use of apps and gamification as a form of e-learning is not very common.

3.2 Art Therapy Education competences

The second of the three in-depth surveys has the aim of identifying which competences in Art Therapy teachers and students already have (self- assessed) and which competences they still lack (compared to the newest trends and methodologies in Art Therapy). The results of this survey form the basis for the development of new methodologies in Art Therapy. Since different target groups were involved, this survey was split up into 3 main parts per target group, namely students, teachers or teaching staff and stakeholders.

A total of 1287 completed the second survey: students (815), teachers (124), and stakeholders (51). Questions about e-learning were answered by the students and teachers but not stakeholders. Out of the 1287 completed surveys, 610 were completed by Jordanian students, 94 by Jordanian teachers and 145 by Jordanian stakeholders.

A.   E-LEARNING

   a.   Experience with e-learning

This chapter on e-learning provides on the one hand insight to the current experience with e-learning of each target group, to give an idea of which applications the participants are already familiar with. On the other hand, their personal experience is surveyed in order to obtain an overview of the most frequently encountered advantages and disadvantages of e-learning. The vast majority of teachers (83.5%) and the majority of students (62.59%) have experience with e-learning in Tunisia. The most common form of e-learning is learning through online platforms for both teachers (61.36%) and students (33.15%). Online face to face

meetings are the second most common form for both teachers (20.45%) and students (28.73%). Webinars follow (teachers: 15.92% and students: 24.86%) and finally apps/gamifications seem to be much less common for teachers (2.27%) and students (13.26%). Table 1 summarizes the frequencies of use for all the forms of e-learning.

Table 1:summary of the frequencies used for all the forms of e-learning

STUDENTS	TUNISIA	TEACHERS	TUNISIA
Webinars	24,86%	Webinars	15,91%
Learning through online platform(s)	33,15%	Learning through online platform(s)	61,36%
Online face to face meetings	28,73%	Online face to face meetings	20,45%
Apps/Gamification	13,26%	Apps/Gamification	2,27%

b. Benefits of e-learning

For students in Tunisia, it is clear that the most important benefit of e-learning is the fact that they can choose to learn only what they think is relevant (26.05%), while for teachers is the fact that students can learn at their own pace (36.71%). Both students (23.72%) and teachers (31.65%) agree that the benefit of e-learning is learning on the students' own chosen time and location. Students also think that e-learning platforms offer more possibilities than traditional classroom (11.63%). On the other hand, teachers believe that with e-learning there is no need for logistic organisation (16.46%), followed by the following benefits: providing more possibilities than in a traditional classroom (7.59%), students being able to choose to learn only what they or their teachers think is necessary (6.33%) and being able to easily update their subject matter (1.27%).

c. Downsides of e-learning

The two most common reported downsides for e-learning both among the students (40.89% and 27.09% respectively) and teachers (33.66% and 32.67%) in Tunisia

was that e-learning: a) requires self-discipline from the part of students and b) results in less "real-life social contact".

Further, students reported that e-learning may cause poor posture and bad eyesight (17.24%) and that they are dependent on technology (14.78%). Teachers also reported these two downsides of e-learning but in reverse order, i.e. dependent on technology (25.74%) followed by poor posture and bad eyesight (7.92%).

B. ART THERAPY SUBJECT MATTER

a. Topics or subjects that currently are part of art therapy courses, as well as topics that should be present in an art therapy program.

In Tunisia, therapy with different art forms, Critical thinking, Art history and Psychopathology are courses that are less present in their curriculum, while Expression of emotions is the topic that is most present. Students mainly indicate a need for Psychology, Developing communication skills, Therapeutic methodology and Therapy with different art forms. Lastly, 54.18% of students indicated that art history is unnecessary.

Teachers show a preference for the topics of Practical skills, Artistic abilities and Expression of emotions through art. Half or nearly half of the teachers believe Art History, Psychopathology and Therapeutic Methodology are unnecessary or hardly necessary for an Art Therapy Programme. In particular, teachers indicated that artistic abilities are deemed 'essential' (56%) or 'required' (25%), as well as practical skills ('essential': 60% or 'required': 22%) and expression of emotions through art ('essential': 60% or 'required': 18%)

b. Specifically proposed subjects, inspired by a preliminary research and existing art therapy programs with European partners involved in this project

For Tunisian students, there is a high response for Psychology, psychiatry and therapy to be mandatory (49.41%) or optional (46.01%), as well as for Medical knowledge and skills - mandatory (41.37%) or optional (51.08%)- and Practical skills and insights - mandatory (43.01%) or optional (52.09%). Tunisian students also attach much importance to Psychology and art, with 50% saying it should be mandatory, and 49% indicating it should be optional, making it the subject with the highest preference for students. Subjects about Art therapy and Artistic skills are viewed to be optional (59.80%) rather than mandatory (33.33%).

Similar to Tunisian students, Tunisian teachers believe that Psychology and Art should be a mandatory course in an Art Therapy Programme, with a convincing 63.37%. Psychology, psychiatry and therapy should be mandatory (50.79%) rather than optional (41.67%). Other than Tunisian students, half of the teaching staff believe Subjects in Art Therapy and Artistic skills should be mandatory (57.28%).

Stakeholders in Tunisia believe that Artistic skills and subjects about Art Therapy should be mandatory (62.50% and 60.71% respectively) rather than optional (35.71& and 39.29% respectively). Pyschology and psychiatry and therapy should be mandatory (48.57%) or optional (50%). Overall there are no courses that should be optional rather than mandatory, which indicates that at least half of the stakeholders believe each course should be an integral part of an art therapy curriculum.

b. Which personal skills should be present or should be taught to a future art therapist

Figures 1 and 2 summarize the personal skills that should be present in art therapists as reported by the students and teachers (creativity, flexibility, emotional intelligence, communication skills, self-knowledge, leadeship skills). For Tunisian students (Figure 1), all skills listed should be part of an art therapy programme, with for each skill at least 90% of the students who indicate it is 'important' or 'very important'. The differences in answers between the various skills are minimal, which indicates that for Tunisian students each skill is equally important.
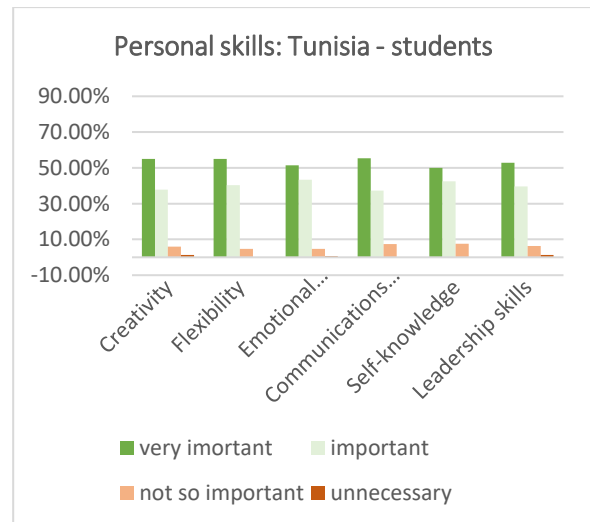

Figure 1:Personal skills important for future art therapists according to Tunisian students

For Tunisian teachers, communication skills are the most important skills, with 65% of respondents indicating that this skill is 'very important ' in an art therapy programme. This skill is followed by Creativity (62.75%), Flexibility (60.78%) and Emotional intelligence (60%). Overall, all skills are viewed as either important or very important.
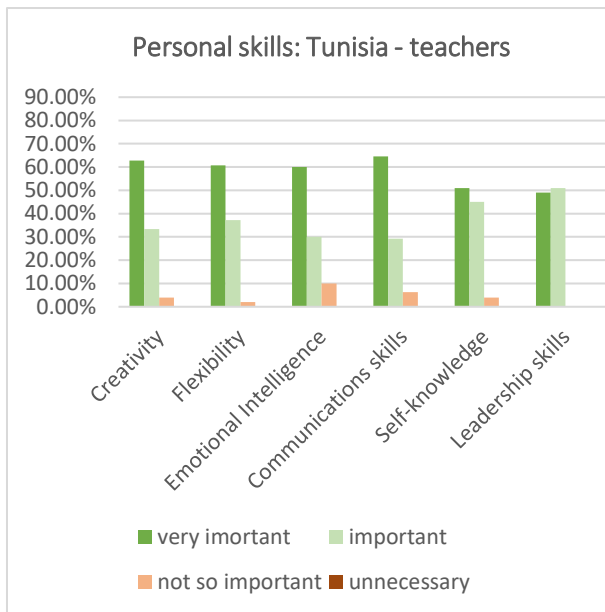
Figure 2:Personal skills important for future art therapists according to Tunisian teachers

C. AVAILABLE RESOURCES AND FACILITIES

The final survey of this study is a survey verifying facilities and resources available in Tunisian partner universities. The main goal of this survey is to assess these resources in order to build on existing resources available in partner universities. Moreover, the equipment laboratory will be based on the results of this survey. This survey was conducted with those who have good knowledge (e.g., staff university, Dean/Chairman) about the facilities and resources available at each partner university.

a. E-learning

Facilities

The survey investigated the most important IT infrastructure that facilitates e-learning services for students, teachers, and participants, classified into 4 categories: a) basic infrastructure (e.g. network, servers)

b) IT devices (e.g. computers, laptops, printers, projectors), c) IT rooms (e.g. computer labs, simulation labs, conference rooms, e-learning centers) and d) e-learning software (e.g. Moodle, Microsoft teams). The answers to this survey showed that Tunisian universities lack modern e-learning software, such as e-learning interface for blended learning, Moodle, Microsoft Teams, except for the University of Sousse, which has a Virtual University Platform. Moreover, only the University of Sfax has printers and finally only the University of Gabes has computers and computer labs.

Obstacles

The survey revealed the following three kinds of obstacles:

Technical obstacles related to IT infrastructure:

Respondents were mainly considering technical obstacles when discussing obstacles related to e-learning. The quality of the network and connectivity are a recurring issue here, as well as outdated or low-performance equipment.

Obstacles related to limitations in IT infrastructure: Respondents mentioned limitations in IT infrastructure, with regards to the number of computers available, as well as IT rooms available for students and teachers to implement e-learning.

Obstacles related to personal skills and situation: Respondents did not mention any such obstacle, which shows that universities are mainly considering technical obstacles when discussing obstacles related to e-learning.

b. Materials

Instruments

All representatives of universities were provided with a list of instruments for Art Therapy Education, and then were asked if these instruments were already presented in their university. The answers were as follows: University of Sousse already dispose of one or more pianos, drums sets, rain sticks or digeridoos and djembes. University of Gabes, dispose piano and drums and University of Sfax only disposes of at least one piano.

Ar Therapy Facilities

Each Tunisian partner university was asked if they had any of the following Art Therapy Education facilities on their campuses: a sound-proof room, a recording studio, a professional camera, costumes or props. The answers showed that again the University of Sousse seems to be best equipped so far, indicating that they dispose of all four facilities. University of Gabes also disposes of a recording studio and a professional camera and for the University of Sfax, the camera is the only equipment at their disposal.

Medical Facilities

Finally, when partners were asked about medical laboratories or facilities for students to access on campus, the answers were as shown in Table 2. It is important to mention that all partners are convinced of the importance of medical experiments and interventions to analyze the effect of Art therapy methods on patients.

Table 2:The medical facilities in each partner university

University Name	Medical Facilities
The University of Gabes	· RAS

The University of Sfax	· Department of psychiatry at the hospital of Hedi Chaker of Sfax
The University of Sousse	· We come from a partnership project with the Faculty of Medicine and with the two hospitals in the region of Sousse.

4. Discussion

In the future, art therapy might be subjected to more rigorous studies in order to gain more reliable and credible evidence. First, the methods used for assessing its effectiveness should be changed to include a variety of approaches.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the therapeutic potential of art therapy, it is important that the investigation includes both subjective and objective measures. Besides these, it is also important to note the various details of the therapy, such as the type of paintings used, the therapist's qualifications, and the theoretical basis of the treatment.

The practice should be promoted in both communities and hospitals. Art therapy guidelines should also be established based on the accumulated evidence. Further studies should be conducted on the mechanisms of art therapy, such as at the cellular, molecular, and neurological levels.

4. Author Contributions

HEALING Project team designed the whole study, analyzed the data, and wrote the manuscript. UCLL searched for selected the studies. UJ participated in the interpretation of data. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

5. Funding

6. Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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