



SWOT ANALYSIS AND INNOVATIVE ELEMENTS IN TEACHING STUDENTS OF SPECIALTY “REHABILITATION THERAPIST” AT MEDICAL COLLEGE-STARA ZAGORA

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ABSTRACT

Training of the students in specialty "Rehabilitation therapist" requires continuous improvement of teaching theory and practice – according to the new conditions in the healthcare system and European Requirements for quality health care for the patient and their family.

Objectives. A survey of the opinion of students of “Rehabilitation therapist” from MC - Stara Zagora and the mentors from educational and practical bases for the impact of innovative elements in the teaching of Kinesitherapy, Art Therapy and Ergotherapy on the quality of training and preparation of a SWOT analysis.

Methods. An anonymous survey was made including students of specialty "Rehabilitation therapist" from Medical College - Stara Zagora and mentors from the educational practical bases for the period 2007 to 2011, as 285 students and 50 mentors participated. SWOT analysis was prepared for the training of students.

Results. It became clear from the research that students and mentors were satisfied with the innovation in education and its application in the practical training bases.

Conclusion. The preparation of a SWOT analysis for the training of Rehabilitation therapist students allows to identify the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities, and to identify the prospects in the professional training.

Keywords: professional training, quality training, Kinesitherapy, Art therapy, Ergotherapy.

INTRODUCTION

Training of students of "Rehabilitation therapist" is organized and conducted in compliance with all state requirements, adapted to European Union standards, new realities and needs of the country.

The main priorities of the training are:

- Good theoretical and practical training;
- Formation of practical skills and competencies for future employment;
- Development of critical thinking of students;
- Forming a new relationship with the patient and their perception as a personality with all their needs;
- Continuous improvement of educational

programs in line with the new realities in Health care sphere;

- Training of working therapists for a lifetime, incl. courses, home study and improvement of professional competence;
- Improving the functions of the rehabilitation team and the ethics in the relationships in the Health care system.

The curriculum and programs of the major are consistent with the Uniform State Requirements (USR, 2008) and the Higher Education Act, the current requirements for professional training of future specialists. At the forefront of training students are brought out social and ethical aspects. The complex perception of the patient - as a person with all the accompanying problems, requires a new approach, namely holistic (1).

The inclusion of innovative elements in teaching Kinesitherapy, Art Therapy and

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Ergotherapy in the theoretical and practical training of students of "Rehabilitation therapist" is a new approach to expand their professional competencies. It was conducted with the design and implementation of new curricula in relevant disciplines and clinical practice, aiming to master and apply the basic tasks, concepts and algorithms (2).

Contemporary Art Therapy found an application in practical training of students in specialized "Day care center for children and youths with mental retardation" in Stara Zagora, which is one of the few in the country equipped thanks to international projects with rooms for Kinesitherapy, Art Therapy, Physical therapy, Ergotherapy, special touch and sound rooms, rooms for Play therapy and Hydrotherapy. There with the help of mentors, a training of students in special methods of Kinesitherapy for children with cerebral palsy was conducted, and a variety of crafts and art therapy techniques were used - weaving, pottery, modeling, painting and more.

Ergotherapy is a component of the theoretical and practical training of students. Applied is a rehabilitation of children with cerebral damage and adults with disorders of the musculoskeletal system, central and peripheral nervous system. It is used in specialized rehabilitation centers for children in the form of Play therapy, and for adults as a motor retraining and entertaining Ergotherapy (3, 4).

The conducting of a SWOT analysis for the training of rehabilitation therapist students allows us to make an accurate assessment of the organization and timeliness of training students, to ignore the shortcomings, and to identify opportunities to incorporate more innovation in line with current realities in the realization of graduates (2).

In this paper we set ourselves the goal:

1. Conducting an opinion survey of students in major "Rehabilitation therapist" from MC - Stara Zagora and mentors from educational and practical bases for innovative elements in the training.

2. Performing a SWOT analysis for the training of students in major "Rehabilitation therapist" from MC - Stara Zagora, in order to identify strengths, weaknesses, threats, opportunities and prospects for professional training.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

- An anonymous survey was conducted of the students in "Rehabilitation therapist" from Medical College - Stara Zagora and mentors of practical training bases for the period 2007 to 2011, as 285 students and 50 mentors participated.

- Conducted was mathematical - statistical treatment of results.

- SWOT analysis has been drafted for the training of students in this major, using research and analysis of documents from the school records.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Good professional training of students in "Rehabilitation therapist" is achieved through a quality theoretical and practical training that meet the modern achievements in Kinesitherapy, Physical therapy and Therapeutic massage including Art Therapy and Ergotherapy. Essential to the quality of education in Massage Therapy is the application of knowledge, practical skills and competencies in training and practical bases with the mentors and all rehabilitation team (2).

In the practical training of Health care professionals in addition to the necessary educational qualifications and practical experience of the mentor, important factors are their personal qualities and teaching skills. The individual approach is leading, but essential is the work in a small group, the work with a mentor and self-training (5).

The teaching of students has to be organized on the basis of the daily requirement to achieve results. The most important task of the teacher is to put students in situations that promote education, and give tasks corresponding to their level of preparation. Work on pre-prepared plan helps the learning process, case studies and more (6).

When analyzing the assessment of students for learning and application of Art therapy (**Fig. 1**), it was clear that the first studied group has not studied this subject and did not give an answer on this question. For the second group it was in addition to training in Kinesitherapy, and about 55% of this group put "Very good" and "Good" assessment for the training in Art Therapy. The third group has the most experience in working in educational and practical bases, and in practicing Art therapy for children and adults, 64% of participating

students have set a "Very good" and "Good" assessment for the training. About 38% of both groups evaluated training in Art Therapy with "Satisfactory" and "Unsatisfactory" assessment. This indicates the need for continuous improvement of curriculum and for expanding the knowledge of students in this direction by extending their practical and theoretical training.

T. Popov defines the Art-therapy as a phenomenon of our times who uses "art in its various forms and a huge variety of genres as a means of recreation and aesthetic impact in purely hedonistic plan," but as "a very powerful educational tool (especially for children and adolescents) and as a part of the formation of a complex harmonious personality", which can be successfully applied to "treat a wide range of diseases" (7, 8).

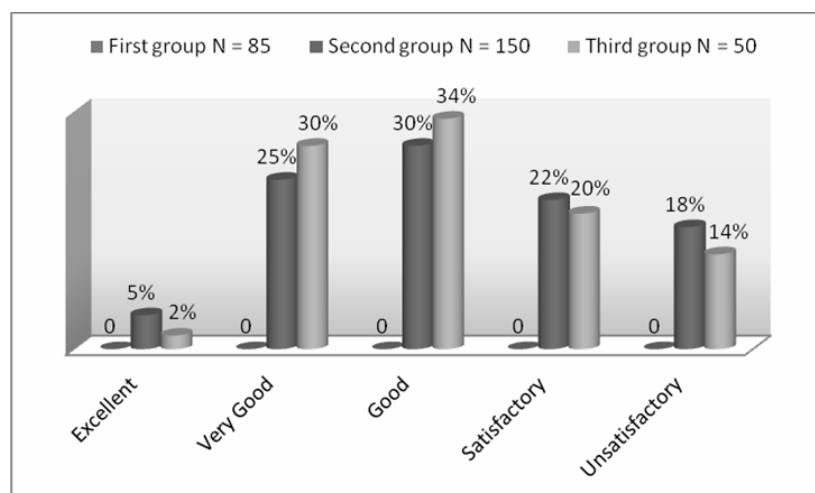


Fig. 1. Evaluation of students for training in Art Therapy.

Art therapy is an innovation in teaching KT and a matter of interest particularly from mentors working with children in specialized rehabilitation centers. The survey results indicate (**Fig. 2**) that 60% of all mentors approved the application of Art Therapy in KT training. It is normal that 35% of the surveyed are skeptical, as they are not familiar with the matter and its application in the rehabilitation practice.

In clinical practice, Art Therapy is used in children with functional disorders of the

nervous system with depressive or aggressive behavior; in children with cerebral damage or trauma to the musculoskeletal system. Applied are various Art Therapy techniques in the form of role-playing games (2).

Analyzing the results of the study it is necessary to examine the correlation between the quality of education in Art Therapy and the use of Art Therapy in clinical practice. It is positively big ($r = 0.8$; $p < 0.05$).

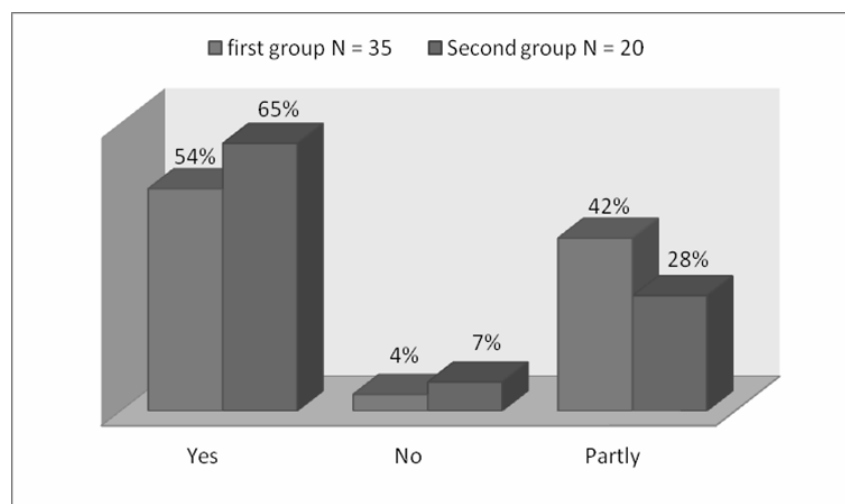


Fig. 2. Application of Art Therapy in the training in KT- observations of mentors.

The quality of education in Art Therapy determines the competence of students in its use at the educational and practical bases. During clinical practice and pre-graduate practice together with the mentors they apply the methods of Art Therapy in children and adults (2).

The comparative share of (**Fig. 3**) students (65%) and mentors (78%) who responded "yes" on the application of *Art Therapy in clinical practice* ($U < 1.36$; $\alpha < 0.05$), there is

not a statistically significant difference. Both groups approved innovations, as mentors help students for their practical application in working with children and adults. This confirms the fact of the increasing use of Art Therapy in the specialized rehabilitation centers in the form of entertaining and recreational therapy. Only a small part of the compared groups (10%) did not approve the place of Art Therapy in the clinical practice.

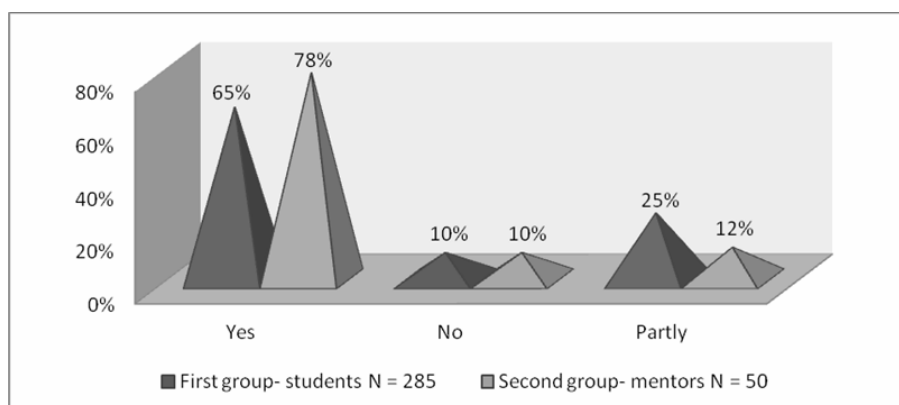


Fig. 3. Comparative analysis between students and mentors for the place and the application of Art Therapy in clinical practice.

Currently, Ergotherapy is used in the diagnosis, the recovery and the rehabilitation of patients with diseases of the nervous system and musculoskeletal system. The training in activities of daily living and training in use of assistive devices is done by Ergotherapy, as well as training and retraining in other activities in self- service and work activities (3,4).

Analyzing results of two studied groups (**Fig. 4**) and comparing the relative shares - 68% of

students and 88% of the mentors, have a positive response about *the application of Ergotherapy in clinical practice* ($U < 1.62$; $\alpha < 0.05$), there is not a statistically significant difference between the compared shares. These results are a proof of the proper application of ET in clinical practice; a better estimate is given by mentors to better experience in clinical practice. Very few of both groups have the opposite opinion.

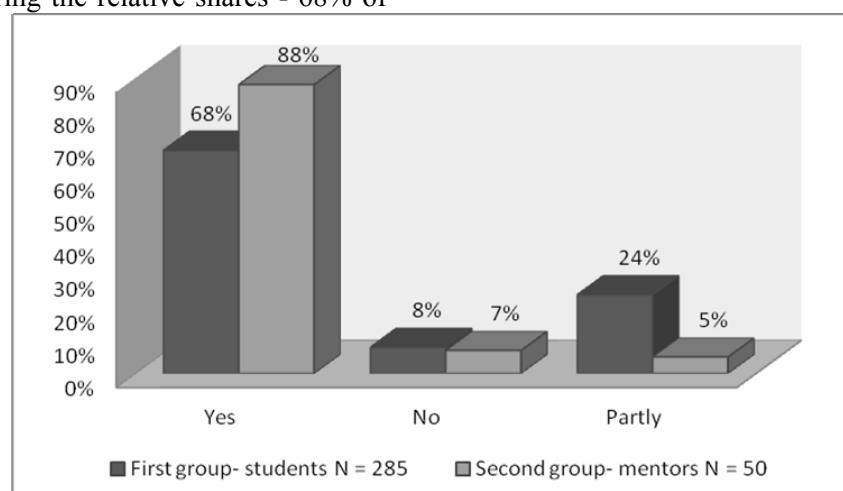


Fig. 4. Comparative analysis between students and mentors for the application of Ergotherapy in clinical practice.

During the clinical practice and pre- graduate experience of students from the major assimilated and perfected many practical skills and competencies. They were set in the new program in Clinical Practice and Diary of trainee and established according to the USR for the application of means in Kinesitherapy, Physical Therapy, Therapeutic massage, Art Therapy and Ergotherapy. The professional competencies are related to prevention and rehabilitation of people - sick or healthy in various fields of medical needs and services.

The **SWOT analysis** for the training of students in "Rehabilitation therapist" was prepared using school documentation (curriculum and programs in studied disciplines), USR (2008), the Higher Education Act (HEA), the Rules of Procedure and Management of Trakia University (TrU) and the Rules of academic activity of TrU.

SWOT ANALYSIS:

STRONG POINTS

- Training of students in "Rehabilitation therapist" is governed by the Uniform State Requirements / USR / since 2008, for acquiring higher education in a professional direction Health care for "Professional Bachelor" degree (9).
- It meets the objectives of the Medical College - to form a highly- qualified healthcare professionals with the necessary skills to work in all structures of Health care, regulated by the Health Care Institutions Act, including in terms of private practice.
- The training is organized according to academic calendar of the University and is regulated by the Higher Education Act, USR and the Rules for educational activity adopted by the Academic Board of the Trakia University.
- The curriculum for the major "Rehabilitation therapist," enacted in school year 2008/2009, has been prepared in accordance with European standards for regulated professions and the Law in Republic of Bulgaria (USR, HEA) (10).
- After USR-2008 improved were the curricula in Clinical practice, Kinesiology, Patokinesiology, Ergotherapy, Physiotherapy with the inclusion of Art therapy and new programs for free-electives.
- Practical training, combining clinical practice and pre-graduate experience, is over 50% of the total workload hours, which corresponds to USR.

- Successful practical training is determined by the effective cooperation between students, teachers and mentors.

- Practical training, including clinical practice, pre-graduate experience and summer internship takes place at educational and practical bases in the city.

- Teamwork between students, mentors, doctors and other professionals is very important as a strategy for clinical training and as a factor enhancing the quality of clinical practice.

- Carried out are experience practices for summer and pre-graduation internship out of the city, and visits to specialized rehabilitation centers.

WEAKNESSES

- Insufficient number of educational and practical bases for clinical practice and including SPA and other rehabilitation centers;
- Insufficient number of professors and associate professors in the specialty;
- Insufficient involvement of students in rehabilitation teams in all educational facilities;
- Insufficient involvement of students and teachers in national projects;
- Insufficient involvement of specialists from different rehabilitation centers as guest lecturers.

THREATS

- Dynamically changing legislation governing the Health system;
- Insufficient number of specialized rehabilitation centers;
- Dynamics of the factors affecting the motivation of trained students;
- Society underestimation of education in the specialty.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Enhancing the professional competence of rehabilitation therapist graduates;
- Increase of employment opportunities in specialized centers for rehabilitation of children and adults.
- Increase of job opportunities in the rehabilitation team;
- Increase of participation in scientific meetings;
- Mobility of teachers and students;
- Raising the prestige of the profession through involvement in various European projects;
- Enhancing motivation for training;
- Expansion of public support for the specialty through active involvement of students.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Results from surveys of students and tutors are proof of:

- satisfaction of both studied groups for the introduction of innovative elements in the training (ICF, Art Therapy and Ergotherapy);
- motivation of both studied groups for education and employment;
- introduction of modern methods in teaching KT and ET contributes to improving the professional competence of rehabilitation therapist graduates.

The organization and conducting of theoretical and practical training is analyzed fully through the SWOT analysis. Determined are the professional competences of graduates and their possibilities for development. Identified are the strengths, weaknesses, threats, opportunities and prospects in the professional training of students.

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