

## FINE ARTS FOR THE PSYCHICAL HEALTH OF ADULTS

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*Nowadays it is not necessary to argue for the significance of adult education and training outside the school system. It can be accepted as a basic principle that adult education and training may be a solution to the most important social-economic problems as it can reduce social inequalities and improve employment and the quality of life.*

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Lifelong learning, personal development and culture have become a necessary part of people's lifestyle. Consequently it is society's duty to support these activities through adult education and training. Considering purposes adult education and training can be general, language or profession-oriented. Profession-oriented trainings concentrate on vocational trainings, language-oriented trainings concentrate on foreign language learning and teaching and general trainings concentrate on courses aimed personal development, development of different types of competences, art and crafts, and hobby courses. The current adult education and training system focuses mainly on vocational training. More and more individuals participate in training courses that give a formal qualification and a certificate, and less attention is paid to general education and non-formal ways of learning. The low number of advertised general courses show that people are unaware of the importance of these courses. Without doubt people need specialized knowledge for their jobs but vocational trainings can not reach their aims if the psychical health of adults holds back them from the effective development.

### New perspectives in adult education

A Swiss psychiatrist who is almost unknown in Hungary Heinrich Hanselmann raised my attention who wrote a book with the title of „Andragogy: Nature, Possibilities and Boundaries of Adult Education” in 1951. He wanted to help his patients to reintegrate them into society. He searched and found new methods for it which based on the following concept: adult education should be more open to the development of emotions as opposed to the traditional emphasis on intellectual development. Hanselmann in his book wrote about art and crafts courses where the purpose is not the created art works but the creating process. He used art as an educational method in andragogy which can help control our emotions (Hanselmann, 1951). His book was not widespread that time neither in his country nor abroad consequently his theory didn't spread out widely.

Modern adult education should develop the individuals' quality of life. Therefore it should be based on the individuals' problems. We don't learn methods and techniques in the school how to solve our problems thus adult education has importance in this respect as well. It is impossible to form a notion of the world objectively because people form an opinion of events different and they sense them various ways. Consequently people's different experiences influence how to acquire the knowledge. This is the basic principle of constructivist didactics. According to it learning shouldn't be a passive process but the active participation of students is important. Based on participate-centered constructivist methods art courses are not book-centered, not the teacher is important but the creative process. Our brain is not able to understand the chaos but it searches the order and clear structures (Feketéné Szakos, 2002). Art is a possible way out of the chaos since it can make connection between the inside and outside world.

### Clinical use of art

A lot of elements of art can be used to help people since it can develop communication, intellectual ability, manual skills, moreover it can help to learn how to control our emotions and temper. A particular way of art courses is fine art therapy. It can be divided into two: art therapy and art psychotherapy. To see the major differences between them at first we make them clear. Art therapy is done in groups and it puts emphasis on the creative process. Works made art therapy courses can have aesthetic value so can be exhibited. In contrast with it art psychotherapy is done individually and puts emphasis on the product that is why the contents of the created works are interpreted and art psychotherapist is an interpreter.

Before 19th century insane people in aristocratic families were healed at home with painting activities, writing and with conversation. After discovering the effectiveness of these methods the medical science began to apply them. To observe the healing effect of art I participated in art therapy in the hospital of Szeged. The rehabilitation department is the perfect meeting point of healing and art. Instead of lying and waiting patients could be active. Art therapy is suitable for completing the curing work. Instead of representing the inside world cognitive ability is developed. Each day patients can try different tasks with several techniques: drawing and colouring mandalas, designing mosaics, montages and ceramics. With each techniques the aim is the same to get a real sense of achievement. The most striking on this therapy for an observer is the patients can cooperate together and form a community. They pay attention to each other, help mutually in this way they can learn to trust and accept each other. For good relationships empathy and tolerance are essential that they can learn here. The participants can gain joint happiness and satisfaction and they can feel happy and contented because of the work done together. The collective activity and experiences urge them for the active participation. After the work finished, a community can be glad of the accomplished works and sometimes exhibitions are organized to present the works.

For this reason abroad a lot of galleries opened in purpose of exhibiting and selling works made at art therapy. First and only gallery in Hungary opened in Budapest in 2009. This gallery named Art Brut Gallery has a motto: „art against discrimination”. Disadvantaged people and psychiatry patients live in isolation and they are distrustful. The prejudice against them retards them to reintegrate them into society. Exhibiting their created works can be a possible way of the acceptance of them. The gallery provides a

place for exhibitions of art therapy works and a place for art therapy courses as well. Moreover, it supplies a workplace for those patients who can not find a job in the labour market. I would like to quote 2 participants who spoke with me about the changes that the gallery and art therapy courses brought in their life: „You have to be on the patient side to understand painting is a possible way of healing.” „Events in the gallery provide a reason to put up my best clothes.”

### Art therapy in adult education

Art therapy can not used only for clinical patients but it could be a course for adults based on self-development and health-preservation. Each person is an individual personality which needs to be shown and acknowledged. Art could be a possible way for everybody to develop the self-knowledge. A particular way of thematic art psychotherapy based on catharsis-experience is a course which focuses on creation, self-knowledge and psychical harmony. As opposed to the name it puts emphasis on the creative process just as on the symbol's interpretation and it can be used for patients and for healthy people as well. The speciality of this course is the 3 parts of each session. It starts with relaxation and imagination while listening to music related to the current season or a poem read out by the therapist. After that the participants discuss the season and its relationship with their emotions. Then they start creating using the set technique. Finally they discuss the works and their represented symbols which can make connection between conscious and unconscious world hereby they help the mental balance and harmony. The creative process provides good opportunities for patients to depict their traumas and complexes and also to resolve them involving the whole personality and not only at a cognitive level. The works of art that are created hold a mirror to the creator, offering to them an opportunity to face the real complex at the background the actual conflict (Antalfai, 2007).

It is difficult to document the inside and complex changes, only people's subjective opinion gives information about them. To become acquainted with these changes and effects of the course I interviewed the participants after the course. I would like to quote some of them:

„I was full of excitement and fear at the beginning because the art word in the course name confused me. I could not imagine it is possible to impress my emotions and mood in art. I was surprised when somebody could speak about my present mood.”

„I was full of inhibitions. Until the course I did not use artist tools and I could not imagine I can paint and draw with pleasure and joy. I could concentrate on the tasks and I did not deal with my problems. I found myself.”

„It gave me self-confidence. I was delighted at my success.”

In general we can state the participants got to know a new world where they could be themselves because they did not have to suit the requirements, expectations and fulfil a duty. They could feel free from constraint of time and they could get a real sense of achievement. Lot of them mentioned they were afraid of the course because they thought it is a course for artists but they could realize it is based on the creative talent. Because of the bad school experiences they lost their creativity but in the end they realized the course is a way to find their creative talent. The created works provided a good opportunity to come to know and understand each other. By this they became more tolerant, open and they could enter into another person's feelings.

To illustrate the success of the course, all participants continued painting studies with the help of a professional artists. I interviewed them again why

they started the painting course. All of them mentioned they wanted the sense of achievement and get away from the ratrace. The most important reflection was the course gave a new purpose and reason to live.

### Further effects of art and creation

Art and creation is a form of atypical learning which is based on self-experience learning. Learning is not independent from earlier experiences and emotions that is why these factors determine the effective learning (Kadocsa, 2006). During the creative process impressions reach us continuously which can be put into words, shared and compared with each other in art therapy. The created works are personal messages about the personality thus the emotional contents of the works contribute to represent and get over the mental problems.

The formal education is a source of stress for children and for adults as well because of suiting own and other's requirements and being afraid of defeats which all keep them from the effective development. An art task does not have sole solution since each art work is a kind of solution, a sort of representation of the world. The different techniques of art provide carefree feelings that can release stress.

Convergent and divergent thinking skills are used for solving problems, doing projects but in the traditional teaching-learning process mainly the former comes to the front and there are few opportunities to develop the latter. During creation both thinking skill can be developed depending the tasks and techniques. Each new product can be created by divergent thinking with the help of the imaginative power and creativity. As a result design tasks such as problems' solving guide us in the most productive direction.

### Conclusion

The researches examining the effectiveness of adult education programs show that the formal education has not got long-term effects. That is why the non-formal ways of learning such as art courses become more important (Farkas, 2010). Hanselmann's (1951) concept has not implemented yet in Hungary. Few courses are available based on emotional and personal development. To reach these development aims we can utilize the possibilities in arts. Nevertheless we need to keep that in view the final purpose is not the career in art but the psychological and personal development to cope with difficulties in life. The personal development contribute to adjustment to changes, to the solutions of problems and conflicts, and to the effective dealing with crises.

A lot of people suffers from different type of problems in their life. They need help but the experiences show that they rarely get help and solutions for their problems. Adult education nowadays provides few opportunities to acquire techniques to solve problems of life. Art therapy though is able to give such technique and it could extend the inventory of andragogy.

To sum up, teaching by art enables adults to participate in formal courses more successfully because it increases their motivation and confidence and helps them realize they can do more than they thought.

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