

Linking Personal Qualifications to Education Standards

Holly Feen-Calligan, Detroit, MI

Abstract

This paper examines how the personal qualifications required to practice art therapy can be integrated into the American Art Therapy Association Education Standards. A review of current and historical documents demonstrates the importance of personal qualifications of art therapists. The author proposes a link between education standards and personal qualifications by identifying the latter as specific competencies. The article concludes with recommendations for how to proceed with linking personal qualifications to education standards. This article is intended to provoke thought and discussion about what personal qualifications are necessary to practice art therapy, and how these qualifications can be developed during graduate preparation.

Introduction

In 2004-2005, the American Art Therapy Association (AATA) Board of Directors began the process of updating the Education Standards (Kapitan, 2004). Art therapy program directors contributed their input for updating the education standards in a national email dialogue facilitated by Education Chair Josie Abbenante. These new standards have since been approved by the AATA Board of Directors, becoming effective in 2007. The purpose for updating the education standards was to upgrade the professional credentials of art therapists and to align art therapy curricula with criteria for licensure in counseling.

Around the time of this email dialogue, a parallel discussion took place among the faculty of the College of Education (COE) of Wayne State University. The concern was how to address the attitudes and other personal qualifications of students preparing for careers in teaching, counseling, and art therapy. The COE discussion was prompted by the problematic attitudes of the students; initial recommendations consisted of issuing warnings and ultimatums. Our discussion shifted to questioning how certain students were admitted in the first place, and whether the solution was to impose greater stringency upon admissions criteria. We recognized that often it is not possible initially to fully assess personal attitudes or

qualifications. Furthermore, most faculty recalled that frequently students make remarkable personal growth and gain maturity during their college careers, and that one should anticipate that change and thus not judge students prior to admission.

Therefore, we asked ourselves, should the personal qualifications thought to be important for teachers, art therapists, and other education professionals be identified explicitly and required for admission to our college? Should certain personal qualities be considered actual objectives for students to achieve during their education? As education faculty, should we be denying admission or threatening expulsion? Shouldn't we be nurturing students' growth into their professional roles? Moreover, what do we actually mean when we speak of personal qualifications?

For teachers, an answer to the last question is provided in the education standards of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), which mandates that personal *dispositions* be addressed during professional career preparation. The NCATE defines teacher-candidates' personal dispositions as

the values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues and communities and affect student learning, motivation and development as well as the educator's own professional growth. Dispositions are guided by beliefs and attitudes related to values such as caring, fairness, honesty, responsibility and social justice. For example, they might include a belief that all students can learn, a vision of high and challenging standards or a commitment to a safe and supportive learning environment (2006, p. 53).

The Wayne State University COE faculty, as a result of our discussion, began looking to the NCATE Standards as a reference point from which to evaluate whether changes were needed in the objectives of our program areas and syllabi in order to better facilitate the development of students' personal dispositions (or personal qualifications) necessary for preparation as teachers, therapists, and counselors.

As the art therapy education standards email dialogue was drawing to a close in late 2005, I began to think about what personal qualifications were important for the practice of art therapy, and to what extent personal qualifications could be found in the new 2007 AATA Education Standards. Although no single standard directly addresses them, certain sub-categories of the standards make implicit reference to an art therapist's personal qualifications. These can be interpreted in such a way that personal qualifications may be identified, developed, and nurtured in

Editor's note: Holly Feen-Calligan, PhD, ATR-BC, is Coordinator of the Art Therapy Program at Wayne State University, Detroit, MI, and past member of the AATA Education Program Approval Board. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to hfeen@wayne.edu. The author would like to thank Navaz Bhavnagri, Myra Levick, Shaun McNiff, Vija Lusebrink, and Cathy Malchiodi for their contributions to the writing of this article.

the process of meeting the theoretical or methodological aspects of the standards.

The notion that personal qualifications are important in the preparation for and practice of art therapy is based upon the writings of many art therapists who have highlighted the relationship of the personal self to professional practice (Allen, 1995; Jones, 1983; Kapitan, 2003; Landgarten, 1997; McNiff, 1986; Moon, 2002). This is consistent with teacher education, mentioned earlier, that now includes personal dispositions in its education standards, and has emphasized the contribution of personal qualities in teaching art (Bain, 2004; London & Freyermuth, 2004; Stout, 1999). In professional counseling, personal qualifications are embedded in the eight core areas of the counseling standards (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2001). Furthermore, counseling literature reflects the importance of counselors' personal qualifications (D'Andrea & Daniels, 1992; Sexton, 1999) and the role of graduate programs in fostering their development (Constantine & Gainor, 2001; Hanson, 1994).

I will proceed in this article with a systematic examination of historical and contemporary art therapy documents pertinent to the personal qualifications of art therapists. Particular attention is devoted to three AATA publications, in addition to the 2007 AATA Education Standards, that reference personal qualifications of art therapists: (a) a promotional brochure developed by the association titled *Art Therapy: The Profession* (AATA, 1999), which contains a paragraph describing the personal qualifications of art therapists; (b) the *AATA Art Therapy Competencies 1981 Revised List* (McNiff, 1981); and (c) *Ethical Principles of Art Therapists* (AATA, 2003b).

Personal Qualifications in AATA Literature

Personal Qualifications

The description of personal qualifications in the brochure *Art Therapy: The Profession* (AATA, 1999) can also be found on AATA's website under the Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) *What are the Requirements to Become an Art Therapist?* (AATA, 2003a). It is pertinent to note that in the answer to this question educational requirements *and* personal qualifications are included:

An art therapist must have sensitivity to human needs and expressions, emotional stability, patience, a capacity for insight into psychological processes, and an understanding of art media. An art therapist must also be an attentive listener, a keen observer and able to develop a rapport with people. Flexibility and a sense of humor are important in adapting to changing circumstances, frustration and disappointment (para. 1).

At the time of this writing, I have been unsuccessful in determining the origin or intention of including personal qualifications in the description of requirements. However, I did find what seem to be some precursors to these person-

al qualifications that I will report here, and perhaps a reader will provide further enlightenment.

AATA Art Therapy Competencies

In 1976, an art therapy competency checklist was begun by the AATA Standards Committee (Shaun McNiff, Chair) as a way to assess art therapists applying for art therapy registration (ATR) at a time when "there were no procedures for the qualitative assessment of skills other than letters of reference" (McNiff, 1981 p. 4). A competency checklist was favored because of the concern about an examination's limitations to assess competencies that are largely interpersonal (AATA, 1981). The committee devised a list of competencies that was used experimentally in ATR applications while Standards Committee member Vija Lusebrink conducted a survey of AATA members for their input. After the list was used in the ATR application process on a trial basis for 3 years, the Committee attempted to distill the original list to the most fundamental skills. The *AATA Art Therapy Competencies* list was divided into four categories or competency areas: Theory Competencies, Method Competencies, Artistic Expression Competencies, and Professional Self-Development Competencies (Table 1).

Ethical Principles

The *Ethical Principles for Art Therapists* (AATA, 2003b), referenced below and throughout this section, asserts that work-related behavior "requires a personal commitment and constant effort to act ethically" (p. 1). Among the 16 ethical principles are three that involve personal qualifications, as defined by the personal qualifications identified in AATA promotions (AATA, 1999). These are: Professional Competence and Integrity (Principle 5), Multicultural Awareness (Principle 6), and Responsibility to the Profession (Principle 9).

Principle 5 specifically calls for art therapists to "maintain high standards of professional competence and integrity" (p. 5). This involves, among other commitments, the ability "to keep informed of developments in their field..." (5.1, p. 5) and to "cooperate with other professionals..." (5.3, p. 5). One could say that cooperating with other professionals requires flexibility and patience, as well as the ability to establish rapport with others and to adapt to changing circumstances, frustration, and disappointment.

Continuing with the theme of interaction with professional colleagues, Principle 9 states, "art therapists respect the rights and responsibilities of professional colleagues and participate in activities that advance the goals of art therapy" (9.0, p. 7). Although the personal qualifications paragraph found in promotional literature and on the AATA website does not mention anything with regard to responsibility to the profession, Principle 9 does so specifically, in terms of the values of art therapists: "Art therapists value participation in activities that contribute to a better community and society" (9.5, p. 8).

Principle 6, on multicultural awareness, states that "art therapists are aware of and respect cultural, individual, and

role differences ... consider these factors when working with members of such groups [and] ... do not knowingly participate in or condone activities of others based upon such prejudices" (6.0, p. 6). Furthermore, art therapists are to "take reasonable steps to ensure that they are sensitive to differences that exist among cultures [and] are earnest in their attempts to learn about the belief systems of people in any given cultural group" (6.1, p. 6). Art therapists are asked to be "aware of their own values and beliefs and how they may affect cross-cultural therapy interventions" (6.2, p. 6).

Significance of Personal Qualifications to Education and Practice

The significance of personal qualifications to art therapy education has historical precedence. In the formative years of art therapy graduate education, applicants to

Hahnemann University, one of the first graduate programs, were admitted based, in part, on two criteria: "The applicant must be a proficient artist with an adequate portfolio" and "the student must be highly motivated for service work" (Fink, 1973, p. 239). Fink went on to describe the qualities of empathy and flexibility that were valued in prospective students, as well as the ability to "feel things and demonstrate the capacity of regression in service of the ego" (p. 239), the latter being a psychoanalytic concept of Kris (1952). By 1989, the faculty of Hahnemann determined that there were three major goals in the education of an art therapist, the first being that "the graduate must be a competent team member and able to maintain a professional and competent identity as an art therapist" (Dulicai, Hays, & Nolan, 1989, p. 11).

Recently, several art therapy colleagues and elected leaders have appealed to art therapists to act in ways that

Table 1 Revised 1981 AATA Art Therapy Competencies Checklist

<p>Theory Competencies</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understanding of the art therapy literature, history and research. 2. Understanding of different applications of art therapy (individual, group, families, special populations). 3. Understanding of different psychological theories of human behavior. 4. Theories of psychopathology, behavioral disorders and developmental disabilities. 5. The developmental stages of visual art expression. 6. Understanding the application of theories of motivation, perception and development to the practice of art therapy.
<p>Method Competencies</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to adapt art therapy methods for special populations. 2. Ability to use art therapy with different populations including groups, individuals, families. 3. Ability to relate art to treatment methods. 4. Ability to utilize different art materials to facilitate art therapy. 5. Ability to assess treatment with the goal of assessing client's strengths and weaknesses. 6. Ability to assess interactional patterns of individuals and groups. 7. Ability to alter one's therapeutic approach in response to requirements of the session. 8. Ability to establish and constantly evaluate treatment goals. 9. Ability to initiate, structure and maintain a therapeutic relationships through the medium of art with individuals and groups. 10. Ability to create an environment in which a client can communicate through both verbal and non-verbal expressions. 11. Ability to translate the art therapy experience into psychological concepts. 12. Ability to carry out art therapy treatment plans. 13. Ability to stimulate creative potential in clients. 14. Ability to relate to and interact with other professionals in a team approach to treatment. 15. Ability to present the goals and methods of art therapy to other professionals. 16. Ability to present case materials orally and in written form.
<p>Artistic Expression</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Personal expression through art. 2. Level of involvement in personal artistic expression and commitment to ongoing artistic exploration.
<p>Professional self-development</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understanding of the way his/her personality and behavior affect clients and therapeutic process. 2. Ability to receive and respond to criticism and supervision. 3. Personal contributions to the theoretical and/or clinical development of art therapy. 4. Commitment to continuing education as an art therapist.
<p>Note: From the <i>Revised 1981 AATA Art Therapy Competencies Checklist</i> (p. 7-8), American Art Therapy Association, Mundelien, IL.</p>

advocate (Malchiodi, 2004); fully participate (McNiff, 2005); support (Gantt, 2004); and re-envision, preserve, and strengthen professional identity (Kapitan, 2005). Do these appeals not require personal qualifications such as patience, attentive listening, flexibility, the ability to develop rapport with people, and a sense of humor? For art therapists and counselors whose professional preparation may include cross-training (Kapitan, 2004), the importance of developing identity, both the professional identity and personal identity of the art therapist, cannot be more important than it is today.

These appeals as well as the language used by AATA in its publications and standards (e.g. personal qualifications, professional self-development competencies, and ethical principles) convey the meta-message that the art therapist's personal self is not mutually exclusive of the art therapist's professional self, and that personal qualifications are important to art therapy professional practice. Yet when personal qualifications are not explicitly linked to the AATA Education Standards or to the ATR and other professional credentials, as they were when the *Art Therapy Competencies-Revised 1981* were in place, then it is easy to overlook them. Moreover, if the requirements for becoming an art therapist include *both* personal qualifications and education, as AATA's website states, then we should periodically reevaluate and/or update the personal qualifications identified as necessary for the practice of our profession just as we do the AATA Education Standards.

One strategy for updating the personal qualifications is to undertake further analysis of how they can be integrated with the education standards. In order to link the personal qualifications with education standards it is important to identify the competencies they address and the education standard with which each personal qualification is most closely aligned.

Linking Personal Qualifications to Education Standards

Although they are not written as such, education standards can be thought of in terms of competencies. That is, when educators consider what content should be included in a program's curriculum in order to meet the standards, they also think about how to assess learning and achievement of them by their students. This was most likely part of the process of constructing the *Art Therapy Competencies* in 1981, that is, looking at the education standards and determining the specific evidence that would demonstrate the satisfaction of competency in each standard.

Relevant excerpts from Standard IV of the 2007 Education Standards (AATA, 2005) appear in Table 2. I have not included the entire standards document in the interest of space. Based on my analysis of these texts, there are at least seven standards that may be interpreted as being embedded with personal qualifications:

- (1) Application of art therapy with people in different treatment settings (Standard IV.A.1c).
- (2) Art therapy assessment (Standard IV.A.1e).

- (3) Ethical and legal issues of art therapy practice (Standard IV.A.1f).
- (4) Standards of practice in art therapy (Standard IV.A.1g).
- (5) Cultural and social diversity (Standard IV.A.1h) (Required Content).
- (6) Cultural and social diversity (Standard IV.A.2d) (Required Related Content).
- (7) Studio art (Standard IV.A.2g).

Table 2 displays the standard with the personal qualification that is embedded in that standard. Bold italics are used to indicate particular language interpreted to imply personal qualifications. The personal qualifications can be approached as competencies or evidence of achievement of appropriate aspects of the standard. For example, to be an *attentive listener* and a *keen observer* may be evidence, in part, of achieving the standard "Application of art therapy with people in different treatment settings." An *understanding of art media* may be evidence of the achievement of the studio art standard "maintain contact with the discipline of art making." To show *sensitivity to human needs and expressions* may be evidence of "critical thinking with regard to attitudes, beliefs, and competent practice" mentioned in the social and cultural diversity standard.

Obviously, not all personal qualifications can be neatly integrated into the education standards. One of the education standards, "ethical and legal issues of art therapy practice," does not appear to have a corresponding personal qualification at first glance. The personal qualifications that have not been integrated into the education standards as shown in Table 2 are the following: emotional stability; patience; flexibility; sense of humor; and ability to adapt to changing circumstances, frustration, and disappointment. These terms describe qualities that are not immediately apparent in terms of how they might be embedded in various theoretical or method-based standards. They are also intangible human qualities that are difficult to assess or objectify. Certainly patience, flexibility, and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances are required standards of practicing of art therapy. Having a sense of humor is important in establishing rapport with others. Emotional stability is a prerequisite or an assumption for human service work.

Those who believe that personal qualifications are important will make an effort to develop them whether they are included in the art therapy profession's standards or not. However, my opinion is to not let it be left to chance. In this article, I wish to appeal to a larger audience—those who may overlook or omit consideration of the personal qualifications of art therapists. It is for those audiences that we have to make sure personal qualifications are stated categorically.

Recommendations: Concerns and Possible Solutions

By deconstructing personal qualifications and attempting to integrate them with the AATA Education Standards, I hope to illustrate how educators may consider personal

qualifications of art therapists and make an effort to address and develop them in their curricula. I show some ways in which personal qualifications enhance various education standards. Educators can decide how they would like to consider personal qualifications in their programs.

Apart from this immediate analysis and application, there may be interest in formally integrating personal qualifications into the AATA Education Standards. There are a

number of venues through which art therapists might continue to dialogue and further identify personal qualifications. The following are three suggested forums. First, the Coalition of Art Therapy Educators (CATE) could begin this dialogue at their annual meeting and continue over email as was achieved with the upgraded 2007 AATA Education Standards. A similar process could be implemented; recommendations of the CATE would go to the AATA

Table 2 Linking Personal Qualifications and Education Standards

	AATA 2007 Education Standard	Personal Qualification
IV.A.1c	Application of art therapy with people in different treatment settings: Clinical interventions for the treatment of children, adolescents, adults, couples and families in inpatient, outpatient, partial treatment programs, and aftercare. Essential interviewing and counseling skills for developing the therapeutic relationship. <i>Exploration of verbal, behavioral, and artistic communication, assessment, treatment planning, treatment approaches, relationship dynamics, and role on the treatment team.</i>	Attentive listener Keen observer Able to develop rapport with people
IV.A.1e	Art therapy assessment: Fundamentals of art therapy assessment, statistical concepts including reliability and validity, selection of the assessment tool, and familiarity with a variety of specific art therapy instruments and procedures used in appraisal and evaluation. <i>Understanding of developmental levels, cultural factors, psychopathology, and psychological health manifested in artwork and art making.</i> Administration and documentation of art therapy assessment, formulation of treatment goals, objectives, and strategies related to assessment and evaluation.	Insight into psychological processes
IV.A.1f	Ethical and legal issues of art therapy practice: <i>Professional identity,</i> professional ethics, and the ethical practice of art therapy. Familiarity with the ethical standards of the AATA and ATCB, as well as the ACA and other related fields. The proper application of ethical and legal principles of art therapy practice.	
IV.A.1g	Standards of practice in art therapy: <i>Professional role as an art therapist with regard to function and relationships with other mental health providers.</i> Knowledge of professional organizations, credentialing and licensure, public policy, advocating for the profession, and client advocacy. Preparation to enter the job market and practice in resume writing and professional interviewing skills	Able to develop rapport with people
IV.A.1h	Cultural and social diversity: Foundation in knowledge of cultural diversity theory and competency models applied to an understanding of diversity of artistic language, symbolism, and meaning in artwork and art making across culture and within a diverse society. Investigation of <i>the role of the art therapist in social justice, advocacy, and conflict resolution.</i>	Sensitivity to human needs and expressions
IV.A.2d	Social and cultural diversity: Theories of counseling and development of competencies essential for a culturally responsive therapist with regard to age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, socio-economic status, developmental disability, education, family values, and religious and spiritual values. <i>Cultural self-awareness through self-assessment, strategies for working with diverse communities, and critical thinking with regard to attitudes, beliefs, and competent practice.</i>	Sensitivity to human needs and expressions
IV.A.2g	Studio art: Maintain contact with the discipline of art making. Explore the impact of art processes and materials through ongoing participation in personal art making. Strengthen connection to the creative process, <i>understanding of personal symbolic language,</i> and arts based learning allowing for the opportunity to <i>integrate intellectual, emotional, artistic, and interpersonal knowledge.</i>	An understanding of art media

Education Committee and Board of Directors for review and approval. Second, a “track” for professional self-development or personal qualifications might be added in future conferences. Third, a call for research on the personal qualifications of art therapists or professional self-development in art therapy might be considered. Research implications could include literature related to how personal qualifications influence art therapy practice, whether personal qualifications can be correlated with being suited to work with particular populations, and/or the personal qualifications of art therapists who have been successful in obtaining employment. These are but three possible areas of research that could be investigated. To give an example from counseling research, Hansen (1994) explored how, in the course of learning and practicing counseling techniques, graduate counseling students also learned interpersonal skills.

Earlier in this paper I suggested that personal qualifications should be periodically reevaluated in conjunction with similar periodic reevaluation of education standards. I have discussed integrating personal qualifications into the education standards and also noted that they do not entirely lend themselves to integration. However, in considering the integration of personal qualifications such as emotional stability, patience, flexibility, sense of humor, and the ability to adapt (to changing circumstances, frustration, and/or disappointment) into education standards, it is helpful to revisit the AATA Art Therapy Competencies (McNiff, 1981) checklist for comparison. The category “professional self-development” in the Art Therapy Competencies list described qualities of a similar nature to the personal qualifications in question. Professional self-development was characterized by these criteria: understanding the way personality and behavior affect clients and therapeutic process, the ability to receive and respond to criticism and supervision, personal contributions to the theoretical and/or clinical development of art therapy, and commitment to continuing education as an art therapist.

Thus, criteria exist historically that characterize professional self-development considered together with emotional stability; patience; flexibility; sense of humor; and ability to adapt to changing circumstances, frustration and disappointment. These may be thought of as qualities involving self-development or intra-personal aspects of professional identity. Education Standard IV.A.1f, for example, speaks to the ethical and legal issues of art therapy practice and specifically mentions professional identity. Perhaps there is room to think of these criteria as evidence of achieving competence in this standard with respect to developing professional identity and ethical behavior.

Some will argue that there are plenty of education standards to worry about without adding any more. However, I would suggest that we need to consider how the current education standards can be interpreted and/or strengthened to include personal qualifications. What makes art therapy practice special is the blend of artist and therapist identities, which are derived from personal selfhood.

Others may argue that personal qualifications are too difficult to evaluate and therefore should not be included in the education standards. However, identification of the

personal qualifications of art therapists will strengthen the field and support best practices of art therapy. Evaluation of personal qualifications may be time consuming, but it is worthwhile and necessary.

Those who believe that it is not the purview of educators to assess or develop a student’s personal qualifications also are not making a valid argument. It is well known that preparation for human service professions such as art therapy requires a different kind of education that involves responsibility and integrity, and is much more than “training” or skill acquisition (Kitwood, 1998). Art therapists develop and evolve into their occupational roles by integrating formal theory and practical application with their personal biographies, merging personal and professional selves until a new professional identity forms.

In summary, this article systematically reviewed current and historical professional documents that demonstrate the importance of personal qualifications of art therapists. A link between personal qualifications and education standards was proposed by identifying personal qualifications as specific competencies. This article aims to provoke further dialogue and research that promote the identification and codification of personal characteristics, dialogue and research that are necessary if the profession is going to make personal characteristics explicit in the education and future competencies of art therapists.

What kind of art therapists do we want to prepare? How can we foster art therapists’ education and growth? My answer to these questions is that educational standards should prepare students not only with theory and methods, with skills and knowledge, but also with strong personal qualifications: Ethical, cooperative, culturally responsive, committed, creative, insightful, reflective, responsible, patient, and flexible art therapists are needed now and in the future.

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