

## REVIEW

of **Natalya Bidyuk,**

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Head of the Department of Foreign Language Education and Intercultural  
Communication, Khmelnytskyi National University,  
of the **thesis “Professional Training of Masters in Music Therapy at  
Universities of the USA”** written by **Li Shanyin**  
submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the specialty 011 Educational, Pedagogical Sciences

### **1. The topicality of the performed work and its connection with the relevant plans of the branches of science**

The relevance of this problem is justified by several key aspects: the increasing demand for mental health support, the growing recognition of Music Therapy as an effective treatment for various mental health conditions, advancements in research and practice, and the interdisciplinary nature of the field. Additionally, there is a rising need for highly qualified specialists in Music Therapy, as well as a necessity for a comprehensive comparative analysis of the unique U.S. experience in the professional training of masters in Music Therapy. However, in Ukraine, this demand remains unmet due to the insufficient level or lack of professional training for music therapists. Therefore, addressing these gaps, integrating successful educational models from other countries, and adapting them to the Ukrainian context is essential to developing skilled professionals in the field of Music Therapy.

Music Therapy and Music Therapy education are extensively discussed by scholars worldwide; however, many aspects remain unexplored in the context of globalization and internationalization. In the comparative study, the author argues that examining and analyzing the pedagogical achievements of the United States is a valuable resource for developing progressive ideas on shaping a new strategy for the evolution of modern Music Therapy education, particularly in the professional training of masters in Music Therapy.

Li Shanyin's focus on the theoretical and practical experience of the United States is deliberate. The USA is a pioneer and leader in this field. It has a rich history in the evolution of graduate education and undeniable achievements in the professional training of masters in Music Therapy, supported by a scientifically grounded, open, flexible, and diverse higher education system. Its universities consistently rank among the top globally, and the USA serves as a leading centre for the development of Music Therapy education worldwide. As a social institution, the U.S. higher education system forms a vital part of state educational policy. Its implementation is supported by a flexible legislative and regulatory framework and a highly developed system of social partnerships, enabling rapid adaptation to dynamic changes while ensuring stability within the educational landscape of American society.

The research aims to identify innovative and more advanced approaches to transforming the structure and content of professional training for masters in Music Therapy at universities in the USA. It seeks to identify and substantiate the pathways for incorporating constructive elements of the American experience into the higher education system of Ukraine. Li Shanyin identified significant pedagogical achievements in the American experience and proposed ways of integrating them into Ukrainian educational practice.

The research was written in the context of scientific work carried out by the Department of Pedagogy and Innovative Education at Lviv Polytechnic National University: “Theoretical and methodological foundations of the personal and professional development of a modern specialist in the conditions of integration into the international educational space” (number of state registration 0121U113179). The topic of this thesis was approved (Minutes № 3/22 dated 24.10.2022) and specified (Minutes № 8/24 dated 25.03.2024) at the meetings of the Academic Council of the Institute of Jurisprudence, Psychology and Innovative Education of Lviv Polytechnic National University.

## **2. The most significant scientific results contained in the thesis**

Li Shanyin analyzed and substantiated the theoretical and methodological foundations of professional training for masters in Music Therapy. She explored the content of Music Therapy Master’s Programs through the perspective of American requirements, characterized the organizational structures and teaching methods, and examined the practical aspects of masters professional training in Music Therapy. Through a comparative study, she identified and justified pathways for integrating valuable elements of the American approach into Ukraine’s higher education system.

## **3. New facts obtained in the thesis**

The scientific novelty of the obtained results lies in the fact that for the first time in Ukraine the comprehensive analysis of the professional training of masters in Music Therapy at US universities was performed; the theoretical and methodological foundations of the professional training of Music Therapy specialists were analyzed and substantiated (behaviourism, cognitive constructivism, social constructivism, connectivism; methodological approaches: competency-based, activity-based, personality-oriented, cultural, interdisciplinary, integrative); the content of professional training of masters in Music Therapy, which is practically oriented and aimed at the development of the ability to: carry out client diagnostics; integrate knowledge about the cultural diversity of clients; jointly develop an effective and clear support plan through diagnosis of customer needs, selection of measures; use knowledge and resources to organize therapeutic care; communicate; maintain clinical documentation, etc. was analyzed; the organizational forms (interactive lectures, seminars, educational conferences, research training, trainings, etc.) and teaching methods (reverse brainstorming, concept mapping, collaborative learning, service-learning, problem-based learning, distributed learning, project-based learning, etc.) were characterised; the specifics of

the practical component of the professional training of masters in Music Therapy was studied; on the basis of a comparison of the experience of two countries, directions for the implementation of constructive ideas of the American experience into the system of higher education of Ukraine at the strategic, organizational, methodical, research levels were defined and justified. The content of concepts "Music Therapy", "Music therapist", and "Music Therapy curriculum" were clarified. The comprehension of the concepts in the field of higher Music Therapy education, master's training as well as features of masters in Music Therapy theoretical and practical training organisation were improved and expanded. The theses on the organization of master's training in Music Therapy in accordance with modern theories and substantiated methodological approaches were further developed.

#### **4. The degree of validity of the scientific statements, conclusions and recommendations formulated in the thesis**

The novelty and reliability of the conclusions are ensured through the use of theoretical and empirical methods, the analysis of a sufficient number of scientific sources (312 references), legislative and regulatory, program documents, and the effective implementation of the research materials and results into the learning process of higher education institutions in Ukraine. The thesis has been conducted at an appropriate scientific level. It clearly justifies the choice of the research scope, defines its object, subject, aim, and objectives, and the content of the abstract highlights the essential aspects and key provisions of the thesis. The main scientific statements and results of the research have been widely presented at scientific and practical international conferences and are fully covered in scientific publications.

#### **5. Significance for science and practice of the author's obtained results**

The practical significance of the study lies in its application within higher education institutions. The research materials, scientific propositions, and conclusions are utilized in the teaching of courses such as *Comparative Pedagogy*, *Current Issues in the Theory and History of Pedagogy*, *Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations of Professional Education*, *Special Seminar: Current Issues in Modern Pedagogical Education*, *Psychology*, and *Psychological Counseling with Fundamentals of Psychotherapy*. Furthermore, the outlined directions of using constructive ideas of the American experience in professional training of masters in Music Therapy can be used for further scientific research, during the development of educational programs, the state standard of higher education, etc.

The research results **have been implemented** in the educational process of the following higher education institutions: Vinnytsia Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi State Pedagogical University (Certificate #06/22 dated 25.06.2024); Stepan Gzhytskyi National University of Veterinary Medicine and Biotechnologies of Lviv (Certificate #812-16.03 dated 26.06.2024); Mukachevo State University (Certificate #1457 dated 26.06.2024); Lviv Polytechnic National University (Certificate #67-01-1420 dated 22.08.2024).

## **6. Recommendations for the use of the results and conclusions of the thesis**

The author's research materials hold significant potential for application in the development of educational programs in the specialty of *Music Therapy* and for advancing research in this field. The practical outcomes of the study can serve as a valuable resource for Ukrainian researchers conducting further comparative pedagogical studies. Additionally, the author's recommendations are of undeniable value for integrating effective U.S. educational models and adapting them to meet the specific needs of the Ukrainian educational context.

## **7. Assessment of the content of the thesis and its completeness**

Li Shanyin's thesis is a complete academic paper with a clear structure and sequence content of scientific statements, which correspond to the purpose and logical solution of the research objectives. The work consists of two abstracts in English and Ukrainian languages, a list of the author's publications, an introduction, three chapters, conclusions to the chapters, general conclusions, a list of references (312 items) and 10 appendices. The thesis encloses 4 tables and 19 figures. The content of the study demonstrates the high degree of validity of the scientific findings and the quality of the research.

In the first chapter "**Theoretical and methodological fundamentals of music therapists' professional training**" the professional training of music therapists is presented as a subject of scientific and pedagogical research, the theoretical foundations and methodological approaches of the training of Music Therapy specialists are characterized.

A thorough analysis of scientific works on Music Therapy education allowed the author to competently identify the key thematic areas in the scientific development of this issue: the history of the professionalization of Music Therapy practice; the history of the development of Music Therapy education; the current state of professional training for Music Therapy specialists; and international activities and foreign experiences in the professional training of music therapists. Valuable for pedagogical theory and practice are research studies conducted by scholars such as Bruscia (1987, 1989), Maranto (1989), Ruud & Wigram (2001), Nolan (2005), Goodman (2011), and Richardson (2011), as well as recent findings by Meadows, Schempp, & Landless (2020), Ravaglioli (2022), Short & Heiderscheidt (2023), Iwamasa (2023), and others.

The author characterized the main methodological approaches to the professional training of music therapists, such as the competency-based approach, activity-based approach, personality-oriented approach, cultural approach, interdisciplinary approach, and integrative approach.

In Chapter 2 "**The organisation of professional training of masters in Music Therapy in US universities**" the peculiarities of professional activity and professional requirements for music therapists in American society are described and analyzed. The conclusion drawn is that the professional training of masters in Music Therapy is a deliberate and continuous learning process. Its primary goal is to develop professional competence alongside professionally important and socially

significant personal qualities in future music therapists. This comprehensive approach ensures that they achieve the necessary level of professional qualification for effective practice in Music Therapy.

This chapter presents the individual educational trajectory of music therapists. Based on current data, professional training is offered in colleges and universities through both formal (academic educational programs) and non-formal education (certificate programs), with various forms and modes of study. It was established that the curriculum includes both compulsory and optional components, as well as general and professional training. General training encompasses social and humanitarian courses, while professional training is focused on specialized disciplines. The development of professional competencies is facilitated by a number of professional (clinical) courses, clinical practices, and internships.

This chapter also describes the features of music therapist's practical training and analyses the content of their education at the master's level.

The author concluded that American educators employ interactive technologies, such as group-based, game-based, reflective, combined, integrated, project-based, and information and communication methods. These techniques emphasize cooperative, partnership-driven, and dialogic learning. The effective implementation of these interactive methods enhances student engagement, critical thinking, independence, and the development of a professional worldview. Additionally, they promote self-reflection on educational and cognitive activities, simulate real-life situations, and foster a sense of community and collaboration.

Chapter 3, titled **“The possibilities of using the constructive ideas of the American experience of training masters in Music Therapy in Ukrainian educational practice”** presents a comparative analysis of specific aspects of professional training of masters in Music Therapy in Ukraine and the USA. The chapter explores the potential for incorporating constructive elements from the American experience into Ukraine's educational practice.

The study of ways to implement the constructive ideas of the U.S. experience in the professional training of masters in Music Therapy led to the identification of three options for integrating the American experience into the Ukrainian higher education system: modular changes, the introduction of American models, and the development of holistic educational models based on American approaches that would align with the educational realities in Ukraine. The author provides recommendations for applying the positive American experience at the strategic, organizational, methodological, and research levels.

Li Shanyin's thesis is the result of independent research and does not contain elements of plagiarism or borrowed content. The ideas, results, and texts from other authors are appropriately cited with references to the corresponding sources. The thesis is characterized by content coherence, complies with the formatting requirements, and follows the conventions of the scientific style.

**8. Discussion points, recommendations and comments on the content of the thesis**

In general, while highly appreciating the scientific and practical significance of the results obtained, there are still several points for discussion and suggestions regarding the content of the study:

1. As a scholar in comparative pedagogy, I affirm that the study of foreign experience in the professional training of masters in Music Therapy at universities in the USA has been conducted in Ukraine for the first time. However, to avoid potential academic inaccuracies, it would be advisable to specify the chronological boundaries of the research, either in the thesis title or in the formulation of its aim, object, subject, and scientific novelty. This recommendation is based on an analysis of the dissertation, which primarily focuses on educational programs from recent academic years. At the same time, in the first chapter, the author references works that explore the theory and practice of professional training of music therapists in the United States at the beginning of the 21st century. The bibliography includes academic studies by master's and doctoral students analyzing various aspects of professional training for music therapists, as well as publications by contemporary authors issued within the past decade.

2. The defining focus of master's professional training is a high level of research activity in the field of Music Therapy, which includes professional and research competencies, scientific experience, and self-education. In our opinion, the specific aspects of research training have not been sufficiently highlighted and deserve more detailed study.

3. In Chapter 2 the author describes the innovative forms and methods of teaching music therapists. In our opinion, it would be meaningful to analyze innovative, research-based teaching methods such as: research-led teaching, research-oriented teaching, research-informed teaching, and research-tutored teaching. Their objectives include emphasizing research findings, fostering an understanding of research directions, developing skills for conducting independent research, engaging masters in the process of investigation and self-motivation for scientific discussion, and shaping a scientific worldview.

4. In the context of Ukraine's integration into the international education area, it is essential to identify not only the achievements but also the challenges facing the United States in implementing strategic guidelines for the development of Music Therapy education. This approach will help prevent potential mistakes and complications in the implementation of foreign experience in Ukraine.

5. Considering the undeniable value of the appendices, we believe it would be appropriate not only to reference them but also to pay more attention to their analysis and interpretation.

### **9. Completeness coverage of results in publications**

The materials of the thesis are covered in 8 publications of the author (6 of them are individual): 4 articles in journals included in the list of specialized scientific publications of Ukraine, 4 works which certify the approbation of the thesis' materials on the conferences.

## 10. Conclusion

The thesis “**Professional Training of Masters in Music Therapy at Universities of the USA**” written by Li Shanyin is an independent and complete academic paper. The research successfully resolves several scientific issues, offering results distinguished by their novelty, as well as theoretical and practical significance for pedagogical science. We affirm that the thesis deserves a positive assessment and meets the requirements of the Order On Approval of Requirements for Thesis Formatting (as amended) No. 40 of 12 January 2017 by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, and the Procedure for Awarding the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy and Cancellation of the Decision of a One-time Specialised Academic Council of a Higher Education Institution or Research Institution to Award the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 44 of 12 January 2022). Its author **Li Shanyin** deserves the award of the scientific degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the specialty 011 Educational, pedagogical sciences, field of knowledge 01 Education/Pedagogy.

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### The signature of Natalya BIDYUK certifies:

Vice-Rector for Scientific Work,  
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