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Firstly a big ‘Thank You’ to all of you who have participated in this first edition of the Conductive College Journal. We are delighted to have your submissions, and hope you feel proud to be part of this development. The presence of a journal is not new in the Conductive world. The RACE (Recent Advances in CE) journal (December 2001 – August 2009) edited by Andrew Sutton remains a valuable resource. With contributions from across the CE world that demonstrated the passions of the time, we have much to live up to in this new project. We are honoured to have a foreword written by Andrew Sutton, without whose actions none of us would be here.

This journal is linked directly to the Conductive College, a strand of NICE (Centre for Movement Disorders) that I am proud to be a part of. As such, the role of this journal is to give conductors, conductor students, and others that pass through our doors, the opportunity to put their experiences, their research and their perspectives in writing. Readers, we hope you will be challenged by these articles – that they trigger questions, make you think, and value what you are doing in your everyday roles. We also hope you are challenged to think: “I could write something like that. A case study or reflection about what I am doing in practice or about something I have learnt, that changes how I work”.

In the first edition of the RACE Journal, Andrew wrote of the need to “explicate the essence of CE”. The submissions in this first edition go some way to communicating what we do, analysing the theory behind our actions as well as positioning our actions as conductors within a wider professional context. The articles represent the diversity of conductors working in the UK. They also represent a range of interests and levels of experience: professional, personal and academic. This journal belongs to the Conductive College, but is here to advance academic opportunity and confidence, analysis of practice, reflection on research and consideration of CE in the larger frame. This journal is for you, to read and reflect on. We hope it inspires you, as you go back to your practice, to think about what you are doing in a new way, and to start to think about how to share that with the rest of us. Maybe you take your work for granted; maybe you think no-one will want to read what you have written; maybe you do not think you have the academic skills.
As you can see from this first edition, we are not looking for overly edited pieces, and if you learn anything from this edition, you can assume that other people can learn from you too.

Though not the first CE journal, this is the first to be published ‘for conductors’, ‘by conductors’, and students of the Conductive College. If we are to raise the profile of CE and the professional status of Conductors, we need written accounts of what is important to us, of what makes us unique, of all the things that we value and believe we can make a difference to. We need to document how we facilitate the lives of others through what we see, what we believe and how we respond. To gain confidence as a profession, we need to gain confidence in our articulation of practice, and of the theory that supports our action.

Theresa Kinnersley
October 2018

We are looking for five more submissions for the next edition in March. We have guidelines for submission, and can offer some help with your writing, so come on, give it a go.
**DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

Post graduate modules for conductors 2018
These can be ‘stand-alone’ or as part of the MA in CE

Social Learning Theories in Special Education
15th – 16 November and 6th – 7th December

Dynamic Supervision in Special Education
14th – 15th March and 21st – 22nd March 2019

Transformative Special Needs Teacher
16th – 17th May and 20th – 21st June 2019

Other postgraduate training

Introduction to Conductive Education and Block 1 of Multi-Disciplinary Conductor Qualification Training
16th – 18th January 2019
Towards a social and educational role
For in-house journals
Andrew Sutton

This is an in-house journal, a kind of regular (serial) publication published by a particular institution and dealing mainly, though not necessarily exclusively, with its own activities. The status of such a publication within the huge range of publications available in the opening decades of the 21st century is not wholly unproblematical. I suggest that, given the current state of the art within Conductive Education, in-house journals do have a role to play for the betterment of the whole, not least where produced by conductor-training institutions.

In this dynamic context, where Conductive Education’s social context is in perpetual movement, as new institutions emerge and the very language bends to accommodate change, an in-house publication offers, in familiar form, the chance for outsiders to see what at least some people in the sector are thinking about, what is being done, and perhaps why.

The Conductive College Journal is published by a conductor-training institution. In 2018 it is becoming even harder to define what ‘conductors’ are (and the word ‘training’ is also overdue for major reconceptualisation). For the sake of putting something on paper, and in age-order, here is my own present list of training institutions within Conductive Education:

András Pető Faculty of the Semmelweis Medical University, Budapest, Hungary
National Institute of Conductive Education, Birmingham, England
Aquinas College, Grand Rapids Michigan, USA
Tsad Kadima, Jerusalem, Israel
Adventist University of Health Sciences, Orlando, Florida

Add to these, perhaps:
As yet unspecified training schemes intended for Hungary’s ‘near abroad’, presumably dependent on the Hungarian Government’s continuing foreign policy
And also consider this:
SAHK’s colossal in-house training scheme in Hong Kong, a different line of development within Conductive Education from that manifest in the above
Whatever is now happening in the rest of China
A potential Tower of Babel, and not just linguistically, conductor-training courses are also an absolutely crucial part of the whole movement to sustain and develop Conductive Education worldwide.
An in-house journal in Conductive Education

In-house journals could provide a potential window into what such diverse training institutions actually do. They could provide a glimpse of what is being considered and achieved and, over a period of time, allow outsiders to develop a feel for different courses’ differing strengths, orientation etc. That is essential for a working market at the service of would-be students, future employers of graduates, and potential supporters.

Rightly or wrongly, in-house journals can serve as showcases, a litmus, for the training courses that produce them.

And, in the context of Conductive Education, bearing in mind that not all ‘outsiders’ will be kindly disposed towards the heritage of András Petö, in-house journals may also have to serve as a line of defence, and avoid creating hostages to fortune.

Precedents and model

The majority of the above training courses seem to have no in-house journal and there is little earlier precedent to suggest what might constitute a model for a new in-house Conductive Education journal. Various bulletins, newsletters etc. have come and gone in Conductive Education over the years, but the term ‘journal’ implies something rather more. For many, this is in the style and range of content of professional-academic journals: an edited collection of articles submitted by a range of authors. For some it also raises the expectation of ‘peer review’.

If within Conductive Education there is little obvious model for what might be aimed for, then perhaps this is a good thing. It is for future editors to develop their own models in the light of the apparent triumphs and errors of those few that went before, but also to suit the emerging social context in which they themselves work, and new technological developments.

Nearly twenty years ago, at what now seems the dawn of the Internet age, the Foundation for Conductive Education published an in-house newsletter, RACE (Recent Advances in Conductive Education), which ran twice-yearly from 2001 to 2009, in paper form. On the occasion of its final issue, co-editor Gill Maguire summed up the RACE experience:

Over its eight-year life, 90 items, editorials, articles, book reviews, bibliographies, and a conference report were published. These covered all aspects of Conductive Education including history, philosophy, practice, families, adults, children, training, development, information technology. Contributors included conductors, parents, researchers, lecturers, service-users, and students.

e-conduction.org/ceinformation/recent-advances-in-conductive-education
Over the course of its publication, RACE increasingly looked like a ‘proper journal’ and some at least of its articles aspired to be at a level fit for outside journal-publication (at national level, anyway). There was continuing pressure to make the leap to the next stage: become peer-reviewed. An international Editorial Advisory Board was assembled and the appropriate mechanisms established but RACE had overstepped the mark: the field of Conductive Education was unable to produce the necessary texts for Advisers’ review. The lesson from RACE perhaps is to know your level, and stick to it.

In 2016 PAK (the András Pető Faculty) commenced publishing an ambitious twice-yearly in-house journal, Tudomány és Hivatás (conventionally rendered into English as ‘Science and Profession’):

semmelweis.hu/pak/kutatas/tudomany-es-hivatas-folyoirat

The size of this publication represents the scale of the organisation behind it. It covers a wide range of topics, theoretical and practical, plus news items. As its title implies, it is written almost wholly in Hungarian. While this is altogether appropriate for an in-house publication of an institution situated in Hungary, it does point up a problem inherent to such a multinational field as Conductive Education, if in-house publications are also to reach out to significant outside audiences.

Tudomány és Hivatás hansomly achieves the form and range of topics of what most consider to constitute an academic-professional publication. In terms of substance, however, it remains within the confines of the category of in-house journals: it is not an independently peer-reviewed journal. That is as it should be, as long as everyone involved realises this. It sets a high bar presentationally, but that should not dissuade others from doing their own thing within the scope of their own resources.

Consideration of creating a proper, communicable knowledge base for Conductive Education inevitably evokes the sometimes unwelcome words ‘discipline’ and ‘hierarchy’. If Conductive Education is to be accepted as a legitimate subject of study, and meet present-day requirements for official support, financial and otherwise, then it will just have to develop a wing of the sort that Hungarians call tudományos, Germans Wissensschäftliche, Russians nauchnaya, etc. etc. Of course there are other things to be achieved, but there seems no way out of this one. Over the years a remarkably small body of individuals have followed their own lines in this respect but this is a goal to be pursued on various fronts, and in-house journals are a fairly simple structure with which to reinforce this front.

There is already such a lot published on Conductive Education, most nowadays appearing on line. Start listing this and one begins to create a formidable column, one in which all entries on the page look equal. This might lull the unwary into believing that Conductive Education has a communicable knowledge base, a ‘literature’ even. It does not. Perhaps Conductive Education’s greatest failure and source of weakness, going back
Way beyond its first internationalisation in the mid nineteen-eighties, has been its failure to achieve coherence. A technical literature presumes a hierarchy of knowledge, ways of sorting out and knowing what at one end of such a range is worthwhile, of real value and, at its other end meretricious tosh. Needed here is a Darwinian process in which transparent principles ensure ‘survival of the fittest’, through a process of critical, analytic writing and editing that permit the civilised but sometimes very necessary discarding of old ideas and practices, on an ever-continuing basis. The humble house journal can contribute towards developing the expectation of such a process as an essential part of developing the field.

Creation and development of a proper, interlocked technical literature is therefore not just a means of communicating knowledge but also an important means of refining and developing it. In-house journals are one brick in the structure of a flourishing knowledge system.

For any foreseeable future, spontaneously created Conductive Education institutions will likely form and develop according to their local conditions and constraints, with the process of diversification proceeding accordingly. This will likely occur in a haze of ever widening forms of online expression, beyond today’s tweets, blogs, self-publication, picture-and video-shares, public relations releases and false news. Some of this will be beneficial, much likely not. Conductive Education will be subject to all this, and more. This will increase rather than diminish the need for a greater amount of disciplined and trustable sources of knowledge, and for wider establishment of the mind-set to require something better.

There are of course some who are willing and able to take a deep breath, shout ‘Geronimo’, and leap straight out into the world of professional/academic publication. Good luck to them. What happens to them will be part of the Darwinian process. Others may welcome nurturing in the kinder atmosphere of internal publication before taking that plunge. A locally produced in-house journal is an obvious useful transitional tool, safely bridging the gap between writing undergraduate assignments and dissertations across to proper articles for communicating with others in the wider professional-academic world, to be respected as a training and practice ground for writers and editors where emerging talent can be nurtured.

This is as true for conductors in training, and for many practising and ex-conductors too – and for others also involved in the process and provision of Conductive Education in various roles. There is a wealth of knowledge, experience and critical analysis out there that would merit wider public exposure if only the means were to hand to encourage and facilitate this. In-house journal based at a conductor-training institution but drawing upon a wider sphere of influence could be in a strong position to provide the safe space and mentoring that may be needed to realise this for the greater good.

The determining factor will be of course neither format nor technology but – as ever – the human factor, critically in writers and editors. More people within and around Conductive Education need to be encouraged to want to

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At the micro-level

For any foreseeable future, spontaneously created Conductive Education institutions will likely form and develop according to their local conditions and constraints, with the process of diversification proceeding accordingly. This will likely occur in a haze of ever widening forms of online expression, beyond today’s tweets, blogs, self-publication, picture-and video-shares, public relations releases and false news. Some of this will be beneficial, much likely not. Conductive Education will be subject to all this, and more. This will increase rather than diminish the need for a greater amount of disciplined and trustable sources of knowledge, and for wider establishment of the mind-set to require something better.

In-house journals have long held a place in the hierarchy of publications, in which newcomers may gain confidence, learn their craft, and feel empowered, with mentoring close to hand where needed.

There are of course some who are willing and able to take a deep breath, shout ‘Geronimo’, and leap straight out into the world of professional/academic publication. Good luck to them. What happens to them will be part of the Darwinian process. Others may welcome nurturing in the kinder atmosphere of internal publication before taking that plunge. A locally produced in-house journal is an obvious useful transitional tool, safely bridging the gap between writing undergraduate assignments and dissertations across to proper articles for communicating with others in the wider professional-academic world, to be respected as a training and practice ground for writers and editors where emerging talent can be nurtured.

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The determining factor will be of course neither format nor technology but – as ever – the human factor, critically in writers and editors. More people within and around Conductive Education need to be encouraged to want to
'get something into print'. May the Conductive College Journal help achieve this, and create a precedent for others to do the same.

AS

In the mid nineteen-eighties, Andrew Sutton contributed to the activities that led to the then explosion of public interest in Conductive Education, first in the UK and consequently wider afield. He has long retired but keeps an eye of what has been happening as a result.
During September 2016 I was set a task to construct sessions based around an aspect of practice that both interested me, and that I believed would act as an adjunct to weekly CE sessions. These ‘re-ablement’ sessions, the aim of which was to develop skills and confidence, whilst supporting their conductive aims, were to be provided free of charge to participants attending regular CE sessions. At this time much of my experience and interest had developed around participants in the stroke groups, in particular those with expressive and receptive speech and language difficulties. Having researched several options, whilst recognizing that as conductors we work holistically, I felt that there must be a 21st century ‘tool’ that could help me in enabling these participants to interact more effectively, learn different skills, and engage with their friends and families with greater confidence. I found an application entitled ‘Tactus Therapy software’, and from there developed iSpeak conductive re-ablement sessions. This short article outlines my journey and the potential impact this and similar ‘apps’ can make to people with aphasia following stroke. The aim of these re-ablement sessions was to enable aphasic participants who have survived a stroke, to develop their communication skills beyond what was possible within the CE session itself. The applications, for use at home however do not replace a speech therapist, but can be considered an appropriate addition for the participant to work on their own individual goals/aims, which can be set by the speech therapist.

“CE is based on a ‘simple’ concept of human potential; meaning that everyone has the capability to learn and develop irrespective of his or her starting point. Whilst most of us agree with this statement in practice many systems place barriers and boundaries on this learning. People with disabilities frequently spend much of their time being assessed for what they ‘cannot do’ rather than what potential they have. Conductors are highly trained to observe this potential in a person; to nurture their development and devise structured programs to enable success. CE combines education, psychology and medical science and considers all aspects of the person simultaneously (NICE, 2017).

There are many forms of aphasia and no two people are affected in the same way. The main issues impacting an individuals’ ability to interact with those around them, and with the environment may relate to some/all of the following:

- Speaking (Expressive Aphasia)
- Understanding (Receptive Aphasia)
- Reading
- Writing
- Using Numbers
- Dealing With Money
- Telling The Time

(Stroke Association, 2018).
Two participants signed up for the ten weekly sessions. Each of them was given an iPad for the duration of each session, although it was not possible for them to take them home. There was no funding for these sessions, and so equipment was scarce. Individual access of the iPads meant that they could each work independently, as well as share the same experience. The Tactus Softwear ‘language 4 in 1’ aims to cover all aspects of aphasia, for example comprehension, naming, reading and writing. Participants were encouraged to choose to work on listening, reading, speaking, or spelling using personalised and functional vocabulary at a variety of levels (Tactus Therapy Solutions, 2011-2018).

Each weekly session began in a similar way, resembling aspects of a CE session. These included the following:

1. Breathing tasks eg; blowing bubbles on their own, in water through a straw, using a musical instrument such as harmonica, recorder or trumpet.

2. Engaging facial muscles through the use of mimicry, lip and tongue movements all whilst using a mirror to give feedback.

3. Most recently I used a free application from a company called LinGraphica – oral movements which can be played on the iPad or android to follow individually, or together on big screen. The latter supports the creation of a positive atmosphere, and use of humour to increase confidence. I found, as within a CE context, that communication and learning develops best when within a heterogeneous group of participants. In this way they are encouraged to share, empathise and motivate each other to try, take a risk and laugh. There is no one better to understand than someone with a similar difficulty.

4. Sounds – using applications or saying out loud ‘oo’, ‘ee’ plus others.

5. Then each participant then works on their own individual aims/goals with the use of the iPad and applications.

Setting individual aims, I encourage each participant to work independently (with my support) using the software icons to prevent and troubleshoot problems as they may occur, e.g. if there is a difficulty spelling a word, the picture gives a clue. When they press the picture, the speaker will say the word out loud. They then choose and drag each letter into the gap, in this way spelling the word, linking the picture to the written text and the articulated word/sound. This opportunity to work independently, enables participants to work at their own pace. There were times however when partners participated in the sessions, or supported the individual at home on their own device. Feedback from these sessions makes me believe that if the partner/family are engaged with the individual, then their learning is shared and both benefit from the experience. This can then become a shared experience, rather than adding to the list of individual ones.
“In a study conducted by Brielle Stark at the University of Cambridge, people with chronic aphasia used Language Therapy for at least 20 minutes a day over a 4-week period. Their language abilities were measured before and after using the Comprehensive Aphasia Test. Every participant showed improvement. Some scores improved up to 250%” (By Tactus Therapy| June 24th, 2015).

During the last 2 years I have seen many improvements in controlling breathing and saliva control, memory, reading, writing, speech and understanding. Each participant is different and many factors apply.

At the start of their iSpeak session I have carried out ‘Comprehensive Aphasia Test’ where I carry out various tasks to ascertain the difficulties for each person.

This graph suggests that Tony finds it difficult to comprehend and follow instructions however, he is aware of his environment and can recognise pictures. He is unable to gesture using objects or speak. Also he is unable to do mathematics or understand money. After the iSpeak sessions he is able to follow simple instructions, doing simple mathematics (addition and subtraction), gesture with some objects i.e. comb, shave.

Tony was able to understand spoken words and sentences and choose the correct picture appropriately. This was also true when reading sentences himself. He found when listening to spoken sentences and paragraphs he was a little confused therefore he needed to be set targets to read short sentences through the application and choose the matching picture to the sentence out of 4. Generally he is scoring 8/10.
Initially Tony scored quite low on this graph, showing frustration with not being able to say the words that he would like. However he was able to copy words that were written on paper.

Tony has made good progress with expressive language, he now able to say or sing 15 or so words without prompting. He is able to focus more with reading words, sentences and copy writing paragraphs.

Tony was set individual aims linking to the Conductive aims:

- To improve facial/lip/mouth/tongue muscles.
- To improve control of saliva and swallowing.
- To improve breathing.
- To improve sounds/vocabulary/speech.
- To improve comprehension of written word/sentence.
- To improve melodic intonation (singing words).

To work on the above iSpeak aims combining Conductive aims Tony is able to take part in the Conductive Education session without frustration, improving overall facial paralysis, improving breathing control to be able to make sounds which leads to speech. Tony is now able to understand and follow instructions, which is helping with awareness of movement and where his body is in space to gain more independence.

Expressive Language

Expressive Language %

- Repitition of complex words
- Repitition of non words
- Repitition of digit strings
- Repitition of sentences
- Naming objects
- Naming actions
- Spoken picture description
- Reading words
- Reading complex words
- Reading function words
- Reading non words
- Writing (picture names)
- Writing (to dictation)
- Written picture description

Was all part of the test but scored 0
Conclusion

The participants ultimately want to improve. Over the past 2 years each participant has improved in many ways. It is overwhelming when their partner comes to the session saying that they have said their partners name for the first time since their stroke. The list goes on. This re-ablement session is an addition to their Conductive Education session and I believe the iSpeak session enables them to participate further. It enables their overall confidence to improve which benefits their social, psychological, physiological and educational needs to be met. This exactly reflects the aim of Conductive Education – to teach the whole person.

For me what a fantastic opportunity to merge Conductive Education and iSpeak sessions and observe the formidable progress each participant has achieved.

This opportunity has encouraged myself as a professional to learn more and to take a post graduate in ‘acquired communication disorder’ to be able to understand the significance of communication and how it can supplement conductive education to improve peoples’ livelihoods.

Author: At the time of writing, Sue Mechan was a Conductor at National Institute of Conductive Education (NICE). She is now working at Megan Baker House.

sue@meganbakerhouse.org.uk
The Child with Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) in a Conductive Education (CE) Setting: An Exploration

Stephie Mason

This article aims to highlight key points from the research project I recently conducted. The researcher explored how the child with CVI fits into a Conductive Education setting and how conductors strive to work alongside the child with CVI who has unique needs and how they are incorporated into CE practice. The study included 11 conductors from 3 centres across the UK, with all conductors responding to a questionnaire and 2 conductors participating in an interview. The data gathered from the research was insightful and has given me a wealth of ideas of how other conductors work alongside the child with CVI and other professionals in order to allow this child to learn and draw out their potential. The researcher considered this research influential to their practice and learnt that each child they work with is unique, whether they have CVI or not. When working with the child with CVI there is no text book answer on how to work with the child and adapt to their needs. However, this article should provide you with examples of how other conductors have differentiated for the child with CVI and whilst also looking for ways and ideas of how to include the child into our practice. Some of these ideas and knowledge was gained from training they had received and the research investigates the impact training has on the conductors practice. I was able to conclude from this research that a good working relationship with the child and a Visual Impairment (VI) teacher is beneficial to practice and that training on CVI allows the conductor to have knowledge of a range of ways to differentiate for the needs of the child with CVI and can help build their confidence in working alongside the child.

Abstract

This article aims to highlight key points from the research project I recently conducted. The researcher explored how the child with CVI fits into a Conductive Education setting and how conductors strive to work alongside the child with CVI who has unique needs and how they are incorporated into CE practice. The study included 11 conductors from 3 centres across the UK, with all conductors responding to a questionnaire and 2 conductors participating in an interview. The data gathered from the research was insightful and has given me a wealth of ideas of how other conductors work alongside the child with CVI and other professionals in order to allow this child to learn and draw out their potential. The researcher considered this research influential to their practice and learnt that each child they work with is unique, whether they have CVI or not. When working with the child with CVI there is no text book answer on how to work with the child and adapt to their needs. However, this article should provide you with examples of how other conductors have differentiated for the child with CVI and whilst also looking for ways and ideas of how to include the child into our practice. Some of these ideas and knowledge was gained from training they had received and the research investigates the impact training has on the conductors practice. I was able to conclude from this research that a good working relationship with the child and a Visual Impairment (VI) teacher is beneficial to practice and that training on CVI allows the conductor to have knowledge of a range of ways to differentiate for the needs of the child with CVI and can help build their confidence in working alongside the child.

Aims of the research

Prior to conducting this research, I found I often came across different associated conditions when working with children with movement disorders, primarily being Cerebral Palsy. I felt that in my training as a conductor I knew how to work alongside different types of Cerebral Palsy, affecting different areas of the brain and at different levels, however I felt unsure about how to approach a child who may be partially sighted, hard of hearing, epileptic or have more complex needs. I began to question how and what I was meant to do to include this child in the group – an important methodological tool in Conductive Education. Therefore, I chose to specify in Cortical Visual Impairment as this condition is caused by damage to the visual pathways in the brain meaning that the eye itself functions ‘normally’, it is the visual pathways that cannot translate and process what is seen. As conductors and within conductive education we believe in the neuroplasticity of the brain, and so if we can create new pathways for movement, can we create new pathways for vision too? I felt the two really went hand in hand and wanted to explore further how we can bring the two together – how does the child with CVI fit into a CE setting? What have conductors found to be beneficial and how have they already adapted their practice.
Research Questions

Alongside the title of my research project, I also outlined 3 research questions which I wanted to answer as part of the project helping to answer the overall ‘question’. My research questions were:

RQ1. What information do conductors use to assess and evaluate learning in the child with CVI?

RQ2. In what ways do conductors differentiate for the needs of the child with CVI?

RQ3. How does the human principle impact the conductors approach to working with the child with CVI?

Methods

As outlined, I used both questionnaires and interviews to carry out my research. The questionnaires sent out to conductors contained mostly closed questions, with some giving conductors the opportunity to expand their answers below to give details about their experiences and opinions. This generated mostly quantitative data. The interviews that 2 conductors participated in were semi-structured, allowing me to obtain more detailed and qualitative data. The interviews were conducted after I had gathered data from the questionnaires, so I was also able to collate data gathered from the questionnaires and identify gaps in what I wanted to find out and target these areas during the interview. For example, one research question focused on the training conductors had received and how this had helped the conductor to assess learning in the child. Conductors indicated on the questionnaire whether they had received training, and the interview gave me the opportunity to expand on what training might be helpful in the future too in order to develop their knowledge, practice and professional approach.

Ethics

Before conducting the research, I had to gain ethical consent from the PCA, ensuring that I adhered to ethical guidelines set out by the British Education Research Association (BERA) too. Throughout the study, centres and conductors were kept anonymous, all participants were briefed on the aims of the study and gave consent to taking part.

Sample

Lambert (2012) suggests that it is of benefit for the participant to have experience in what is being researched. As a result, prior to conducting my project I had to ensure that the centres and conductors who took part had worked alongside a child with CVI.

Prior to the research I had also identified some key pieces of literature which had influenced my project. This particularly included ‘Little Bear Sees’ (Tallent, Tallent and Bush, 2012), ‘Vision and the Brain’ (Lueck and Dutton, 2015) and ‘Cortical Visual Impairment: An Approach to Assessment and Intervention’ (Roman-Lanzty, 2007). I found that these pieces of literature allowed me gain a better understanding of CVI, helping to clarify the research questions and become more familiar with the field giving me the opportunity to identify where there were gaps in knowledge (Sharp, 2009).
RQ1 – Training for conductors and assessing and evaluating learning.

Six conductors had received training and five had not. Figure 1 shows the areas of training that the six conductors had had training in.

All six conductors who had training had been able to gain knowledge of how to work alongside the child with CVI. In my literature review I identified that Jackel et al (2010) had outlined that some professionals did not have the required understanding and knowledge of how to work effectively alongside a child with CVI. This emphasises the importance of training to allow conductors to understand how CVI manifests in the child they work with. The conductors commented that the training they had received was often specific to the individual and practical in ways to support the child. With CVI manifesting differently in each child, training may not be as beneficial as originally anticipated as it is too general.

I found that conductors had several ways of assessing learning in the child with CVI. Figure 2 highlights some of the assessment tools they used.
Alongside the tools outlined above, conductors also gave details about using tools such as B-Squared and Pivat too. Some conductors also used sensory equipment to assess learning and progress and the use of observations and a good working relationship with the visual impairment teacher was beneficial too. A close working relationship allows professionals to share knowledge with each other, giving the conductor a sound understanding of what they needed to observe and look out for.

RQ2 - Ways to differentiate

Lueck and Dutton (2015) outlined that the child’s ability to learn and perform tasks can be hindered and that educational programmes may need to be used to address these challenges. Within CE we use a range of task series and programmes to develop a child’s movement and teach them skills. The task series can play an important role in the child with CVI’s learning too. Two questions on the questionnaire focused on how conductors differentiated the session and the tools and materials they use.
Some ways of differentiating for the child with CVI can challenge the conductors practice and methodology of CE. It may be challenging to provide the child with 1-2-1 support within the group setting as if the child requires verbal facilitation, it may distract other group members from instructions and tasks. Therefore, ways of differentiation need to be carefully considered. A child with CVI will often rely upon other senses to provide them with information about the world around them. I found that conductors had identified ways in which they can adapt the sensory environment for the child, which are shown below.

All 11 conductors used auditory cues and touch to provide sensory differentiation for the child. The interviews gave me more detailed information about how conductors had provided this differentiation and what benefit it had had on the child and their practice. This included ensuring that the environment isn’t too hectic, considering where the child is positioned in the room, using body language signing, using an object of reference, allow the child to rest when working on their vision, providing 1-2-1 support and ensuring there is consistency in activities they are working on. As a result, the conductor has to ensure they are flexible and able to respond to the child’s needs, keep in contact with other professionals such as the visual impairment teacher, and have a close working relationship with the child too so they know their needs. All these components help build good practice to provide the child with CVI with an appropriate learning environment. From my research I found the visual impairment teacher has a really positive impact on conductors practice as they build our knowledge of CVI and teach us better ways to work with the child.

**RQ3 – Impact of human principle**

An important aspect of the CE philosophy is the human principle. I wanted to explore this aspect of CE practice as I felt like my view of the child changed. I was unsure as to what they would be able to achieve and found it difficult to draw out their potential. The questionnaire explored conductors approach to the child and how CVI had impacted it. Figure 5 summarises my findings:
I found there was a variety of responses from the conductors questioned. I found that it was hard to specify whether the impact was positive or negative due to how conductors interpreted the question. However, it is evident that CVI impacts the conductors approach as they ensure that they can identify potential in the individual. They can engage the child in the environment, set aims and expectations and use the child’s personality. Similarly to before, the interviews allowed me to explore further the approach the conductor had with the child. Conductors reflected that they included more sensory activities, changed the rhythm, grouped children together according to their needs, built a trusting relationship with the child and set realistic aims. I found that the human principle philosophy prompted conductors to consider how CVI impacts different areas of their practice and how they overcome these challenges.

**Conclusion**

As outlined in the abstract, I feel like this research has had a positive impact on my own practice and I hope that conductors and other members of staff feel able to use this information in their practice too. Since completing my research I have been on other training courses about CVI and had the opportunity to meet with visual impairment teachers. From these experiences, I can appreciate how a good working relationship with these professionals help us build a better picture of a child’s vision and how that presents. My recommendation for other professionals is to work closely alongside the child, use resources and tools suggested by other professionals and be patient with all involved.
Stephie now works at the National Institute of Conductive Education with school aged children. She graduated from the Conductive College earlier this year in June 2018 and based her research project on Cortical Visual Impairments in a CE setting. She now has the opportunity to work alongside children with CVI, implementing knowledge she gained from her research. She can be contacted by email smason@conductive-education.org.uk.


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**THEORY INTO PRACTICE**

The effects of “the process of diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy” on parents in early years CE Centres: A reflection

Fiona Holroyd

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**Introduction**

Training to be a conductor takes us on a journey which begins with learning about ourselves, our methodology and our relationships with the children, teenagers or adults in our service. We begin to develop ourselves into someone who can teach and motivate, in my case, the children through fun, enthusiasm and creativity. We continue growing into our role as a conductor through experience and by developing our unique personalities. There are many events which may influence us on our way.

Almost daily I see parents who are either struggling to cope with their emotions, look sad, exhausted or whose confidence may be at rock bottom. I questioned whether I really understood what journey our parents had been on. With the answer being “No!” my research*, into the effect the process of diagnosis of cerebral palsy (CP) has on parents, began.

Research, coupled with time and personal experience, has taught me there is an additional relationship which needs careful consideration. One that has become just as important: the relationship between a parent and myself. That however is the end point, so let’s start at the beginning...

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**The Complexity of CP and the Process of Diagnosis**

In order to understand the process of diagnosis of CP, we first have to acknowledge the complexity and heterogeneous nature (McIntyre et al., 2011) of the condition. As we know from our practice, the way in which CP presents is unique for every child.

The most recent and widely accepted definition of Cerebral Palsy (CP) describes it as a group of disorders that are permanent and non-progressive where the damage to the brain can occur during the development of the foetus or in the infant brain (Rosenbaum et al., 2007). Significantly, this definition is more comprehensive as it includes the many other developmental difficulties that we see children with CP facing such as disturbances of sensation, perception, cognition, communication, behaviour, epilepsy and secondary musculoskeletal problems.

Hence it is not surprising that CP is currently viewed more as a descriptive label, or a clinical description based on the range of presentations, rather than a singular diagnosis. A more protracted process of recognition occurs, involving many appointments and professionals (McIntyre et al., 2011). It is a process.
We know that 80% of parents know that there is something wrong with their child before a description of CP is given (Colver et al., 2014). We know it is a complex, often prolonged, process which leads to the diagnosis of CP (Morgan et al., 2015). My research additionally demonstrated how different the process can be for each parent. At one end of the scale there were three children whose diagnosis happened within the same or two months of first concern. Conversely there were three children whose parents endured a prolonged period of investigation taking 18 or 23 months.

We know that parents of a child with an unknown diagnosis typically fluctuate much more between their emotional reactions and the cognitive dimension of taking action, than parents with a certain diagnosis (Graungaard and Skov, 2006). It was evident from my research that emotions changed along each stage of the process of diagnosis. Feelings of happiness peaked at the time of birth, where parents were excited and content, but declined to their lowest point at diagnosis. These mixed emotions were described by one parent as being a constant battle with “what your heart says and what your mind says”. “It is definitely like a turmoil. You’re constantly fighting against yourself, what you think could happen, what you think is going to happen, dealing with everyone”.

We know the diagnostic process is highly influential on the emotional reaction of parents (Graungaard and Skov, 2006). Even though the majority of parents have had their doubts and concerns, the disclosure of a child’s diagnosis of CP is still a crisis event (Dagenais et al. 2006, Huang et al. 2010) and intense emotions can be triggered. Bearing in mind that one parent will often react in one way whilst the other parent will react quite differently (United Cerebral Palsy Associations, 2013). Parents described the impact of the diagnosis with words or comments such as shock, soul destroying, devastated, horrendous, anxious, angry, denial, differing expectations to reality, relief, battle of heart over mind, exhausting, resignation, just want to be accepted, somebody had listened, bewildered and lost. One parent said that “we came away from that appointment…just feeling like… oh my god, where do we go from here? What do we do?”. Thus highlighting the uncertainty and anxiousness described by many others in the words they chose to describe their feelings.

This complex and often prolonged process is almost exclusively focused on the child, meaning the needs of parents during this time are often not addressed (Head and Abbeduto, 2007).

Not only is each parent’s reaction to the process and diagnosis of CP different but also the way in which each copes post diagnosis. Rentinck et al. (2010) propose that it is possible to assess (using the Reaction to Diagnosis Interview) if the parent has moved beyond the initial response to the diagnosis (unresolved) and has reoriented to the reality of their child’s condition (resolved). Elements of resolution included recognition of the change since the diagnosis, assertion of moving on in life, suspending the search for a reason, realistic representation of the child’s abilities and balanced statements regarding the benefits of the experience. Elements in the unresolved classification include remaining focussed on the experience of diagnosis in an emotionally overwhelmed or angry stance or use of defensive exclusion or denial are more prominent. Furthermore, when a parent’s reaction becomes more resolved their actions move from thinking oriented to action oriented.
In our practice it is not uncommon to know parents who may not have come to terms with their child’s diagnosis. In my opinion it is important, therefore, to understand where they may fit with regards to being “resolved or unresolved” or indeed, somewhere in between. Through listening to parents and observing their behaviour, their emotional state or their relationship with their child I believe we can understand where they are in the process. Knowing, or at least understanding, the thinking and emotional reactions of a parent can help us understand how intervention, namely CE, can best be managed in order to support the parents (Edelman, 2004) and therefore the child.

If, for example, a mother’s response to the process of diagnosis creates stress or mental health challenges for her, it will reflect in her ability to support her child’s development (Head and Abbeduto, 2007). Consequently, I agree that the relationship with parents is a key consideration in our approach to CE in early years settings.

Experience has shown me that if a parent is not emotionally ready within themselves, they will not want to attend sessions and will stop bringing the child. Consequently, we need to provide a strong relationship based approach from the beginning of a parent’s CE journey. One which is sensitive to the parent’s experiences, the challenges they have encountered (Head and Abbeduto, 2007) and one which ensures that CE is a place where their own needs are recognised.

Relationship Based Approaches to Early Intervention

Due to the impact of a condition such as CP on a child, authors from both CE (Sutton, 2003) and non-CE related contexts (Rosenbaum, 2011) similarly highlight the importance of looking at the family dimension in assessing how best to help. Sutton suggests that consideration of the family functioning is an essential component of conductive practice as is the attention given to the physiological functioning of the child. Edelman (2004) goes even further by suggesting it is this parent/service provider relationship that has been shown to be a potential predictor of the success of the intervention, even when the relationship itself is not the focus of the intervention.

Supporting the Needs of Parents

A number of authors consider how best to support the needs of parents (as underlined in the table to the right):

Surely these methods of support would come naturally to any conductor!

What may not come naturally is the acknowledgement of the need for emotional support from professionals (McWilliam and Scott, 2001; Rahi et al., 2004). My research highlighted that there are a number of parents who really do need support, some a lot more than others. In my opinion, it is not enough

Providing knowledge about the condition (Rahi et al., 2004) and present and future functioning of the child (Ödman et al., 2009).

Providing opportunities to meet families with children with similar conditions (Rahi et al., 2004) also satisfying the needs for relational, social, personal “normalisation” (Ödman et al., 2009).

Showing parents ways of coming to terms with problems in everyday life. (Ödman et al., 2009)
for a family just to “attend” a session. Many parents need a sense of belonging and a feeling that we are “family”, particularly those with young children. Of course, everyone a parent speaks to or sees within the setting has a role to play: from the person responding to an initial enquiry, the person answering the phone, the person welcoming them to the centre/opening the door, to the conductors and assistants in the groups. Through offering a comforting, supportive environment with a sense of belonging, it is possible to create a feeling of well-being (Ödman et al., 2009) for parents. As both parents interviewed alluded to, a place where they and their child are welcome, safe, accepted and can be themselves.

Parents arrive to sessions with a lot written on their faces. Take time to observe. Ask them how they are and listen. Consider whether they are one of the parents who possibly needs more support for themselves. Something as simple as giving a parent a few minutes to get something off their mind, may just make their day a lot brighter. Whilst we are not counsellors, it is my belief that conductors have the tools and the skill set to make a difference. We are first and foremost educators with good people skills, the ability to observe and the capacity to listen. Additionally, if we do this, as Edelman (2004) suggests, with concern and empathy, whilst promoting reflection, we will enhance the parent/service provider relationship. It is important to be aware, however, that some conversations with parents can be emotionally intense and that our responses should be thoughtful and empathetic in addition to regulating our own reactions and feelings (Edelman, 2004). Experience has personally led me to have a greater awareness of this need to regulate and balance my own emotional reactions, whilst still being understanding, empathetic and compassionate.

Conductors excel at creating positive, supportive, trusting environments within which we create the group dynamic. Parents are certainly part of this group dynamic and similarly, this is another form of support for them. Likewise, we should allow time for the parent/parent relationships. They know exactly how one another is feeling and can empower each other (MyChild, 2016) by offering advice, sharing experiences, giving words of encouragement or simply listening. The daily routine is flexible. Use it to create opportunities for parents to speak to you and also amongst themselves. For instance, allow time for free play before a session starts or at the end of the structured part of the session or use snack time to generate conversation. Informal social networks (MyChild, 2016) e.g. a WhatsApp group are another avenue parents could use to communicate and support each other outside of the session.

One important factor highlighted in the research was the importance the majority of parents placed on needing hope (76%) and optimism (71%). In contrast, conductors did not place these parental needs at the top of the list. Hope and optimism give parents a more positive emphasis that allows them to find a way through the effects of the diagnostic. Hope is an important motivating factor (Graungaard and Skov, 2006). Parents of children with CP continually face being told what their child cannot do but very little of what their child might be able to do. Although there is the question about creating false hope, conductors do have the ability to focus on the potential and uniqueness of each child which can foster a sense of positivity (Zapella, 2015) and optimism for parents.

It is my belief that the CE environment can provide a lot of support a parent may need if we are not only conscious of it but also plan for it. In the first instance parents come to CE in order to help their child. Whilst parents are not thinking of themselves in this process, with time, they do begin to realise that they themselves are being supported too. A CE centre should consequently be a place where they and their child are in a safe, supportive, trusting and enabling environment where they all can flourish.
Conclusion

It has been an enriching experience to gain insight into the very personal and emotional journey of parents. This, coupled with an enhanced understanding of what support and also how much support parents may need, highlighted just how important it is to nurture these relationships. Although this has allowed me to approach new situations more confidently, I have also been challenged to balance my own emotional reactions.

Finally, I re-emphasise Edelman’s (2004) suggestion that it is the parent/service provider relationship that has been shown to be a potential predictor of the success of the intervention, even when the relationship itself is not the focus of the intervention. I agree. This has led to my belief that if we do what we possibly can to support the well-being of our parents, there is a far greater chance that the children attending our services will have the “conductive upbringing” we all strive and work so hard for.

- Small scale research across 4 CE centres in the UK (2016). 22 parent questionnaires were completed (mothers and fathers). Of those, two parents were interviewed.

References


In 1997 Fiona moved to Budapest where her interest in the Petö Institute and Conductive Education began. After having her family Fiona decided to return to her passion, by first obtaining her Childcare in the Early Years qualification, her Conductor Assistant qualification and finally achieving a First Class Honours Degree in Conductive Education and distinction in her Qualified Conductor Status. Fiona has been at Steps Conductive Education Centre, Shepshed, since 2010.
Email: fiona@donel-douglas.com
THE TRANSFORMATIVE ROLE OF THE CONDUCTOR

Jules McDonald

Abstract

Conductive Education is transformative at all levels; from the complexity of its philosophy, to the conscious and active processes that link the practical and theoretical constructs, and finally within the everyday use of the tools that encompass its methodology. What follows is an analysis of the transformative process of Conductive Education. Adapted from an MA assignment, this article aims to position CE within current pedagogical and social theory with particular focus upon activity theory and the conductor as transformer.

Mária Hári articulated it succinctly when she said that a basic principle of Conductive Education is that of providing the individual with the opportunity to learn to ‘use the power of their own minds’ (Hári, 1997 in Biro, 2006, p.5). Critical to the successful endeavour towards this aim is the role of the conductor in seeing someone with impairment as a result of neurological damage and believing that his or her way of thinking can be changed (Feuerstein, 2008). This belief that such transformation is possible must then be put into action through the considered application of the methodological features of Conductive Education. In this way the conductor as pedagogue becomes transformative in her teaching and thus leads transformation in the individual.

For the purposes of the following discussions the author has referred to a conductor using female pronouns both for simplicity and since she is herself a female conductor. Also, the discussion has not specified discrepancy between Conductive Education of child or adult learners since as Brown (2000) identifies ‘there are more similarities than differences in the work with children and adults. The over-riding principles remain the same; they are not bound by age’ (p.52).

Key words
Conductive Education, transformative pedagogy, intention, activity theory, mediated learning, neurological impairment, physical disability.

Introduction

Mária Hári articulated it succinctly when she said that a basic principle of Conductive Education is that of providing the individual with the opportunity to learn to ‘use the power of their own minds’ (Hári, 1997 in Biro, 2006, p.5). Critical to the successful endeavour towards this aim is the role of the conductor in seeing someone with impairment as a result of neurological damage and believing that his or her way of thinking can be changed (Feuerstein, 2008). This belief that such transformation is possible must then be put into action through the considered application of the methodological features of Conductive Education. In this way the conductor as pedagogue becomes transformative in her teaching and thus leads transformation in the individual.

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To understand the process of conduction one first has to unpick the exact way in which the conductor views the learner in CE and the belief system that surrounds the conductor’s work with that individual. Sutton (2016) describes Conductive Education as seeing an individual with neurological impairment as having a problem of learning as opposed to viewing it a purely physical disability. How does the conductor address these difficulties within the methodology of Conductive Education?

Neurological impairment and learning

Heys (2016) considers learners as engaging pedagogically from two divergent points in her discussions around the combination of natural pedagogy and cultural pedagogy. In essence she examines the supposed dichotomy of nature versus nurture. Within this she defines natural learning, looking at an infant’s inbuilt receptiveness to teaching as ‘biological’. To examine an individual with neurological impairment in this sense it could be deduced that this biological receptiveness to teaching is impaired by the damage to the brain at a biological level. Heys (ibid) continues to describe the variant strand of learning as social learning or cultural pedagogy that ‘...allows knowledge to accumulate and skills to improve’ (2016, p.280). Again, with the occurrence of a neurological impairment this cultural learning could be regarded as disrupted since it is not possible for the individual to copy features of ‘adult’ behaviour; social bonding is impaired and social learning in the usual sense is doubted or challenging. When looked at from these perspectives the learner with brain damage is subject to both a natural and cultural impairment in learning. As established previously, fundamental to a conductor’s belief system is that an individual with brain damage is capable of change through learning (Biro, 2006).

Let us consider these ideas in more detail with reference to the methodological tools of Conductive Education. Examples of components of a ‘natural’ pedagogy package (in normally developing infants) include eye contact, infant-directed speech and imitation (Csibra and Gergely, 2011). The complexity of a Conductive Education programme acknowledges impairments in areas such as these (in a learner with brain damage) and provides tangible ‘artificial’ methods within which to replace them. For example; imitation is broken down into many areas within the Conductive Education programme, paramount of which is the imitation of movement. The learning opportunities for this are created in multiple ways by the conductor. The task series is created in order to suitably break-down and build-up movements at a level that is appropriate to all members of the ‘cultural’ conductive group. Execution of the task series allows for imitation and repetition to take place. Examples for the learners to imitate are provided by the conductor, facilitators and other learners within the group. Rhythmic intention provides a rhythm and a ‘thought process’ for imitation. This provides the learner with movement features that are relevant to them to imitate (as opposed to the irrelevant features given by non-disabled peers and adults) and in doing so creates a successful alternative to their disrupted natural and cultural pedagogy (Medveczky, 2006). The conductor is able to skilfully observe many things from within this system. For example; with careful, trusting eye-contact whilst she verbalises the rhythmical intention she can look for the flicker of intent in a child’s eyes as they attempt to initiate movement within the task series.
Activity theory – the active intending learner

Fundamental to that belief system in addressing both the cultural and natural impairments in learning is that an active, intending participant in the learning process is critical for change to take place (Biro, 2006). When examining learning and change, activity theory provides an invaluable theoretical backdrop to the creation of an active, intending participant in Conductive Education. Within activity theory it is described that;

“The new activity structure does not appear out of the blue. It requires reflective analysis of the existing activity structure – one must learn to know and understand what one wants to transcend. And it requires reflective appropriation of existing culturally advanced models and tools that offer ways out of the internal contradictions” (Engeström, Miettenen & Punamäki, 2003, p.33).

On so many levels this describes the complexity of Conductive Education practice as it provides a new activity structure for the activity of individuals with brain damage. Methodologically the reflective analysis of the existing activity structure in Conductive Education is provided by the skilled and detailed observation of the conductor when teaching the individual. As Hári directly specifies, the first rule of creating a Conductive Education programme is the use of operative observation that includes the ‘finding of conditions, through which the new organisation can take place, seeing the interconnected factors and social psychological relations’ (Hári, 1997, p.23). Conductive observation is continuous and dynamic and provides the conductor with ongoing and acute reflective analysis. Changes that are required can then be implemented immediately into the learning environment by the conductor.

Strong parallels continue with further breakdown of the definition; the knowledge of what one wants to transcend is facilitated for the individual in the creation of active intention in Conductive Education. As Hári again succinctly describes “Learning how to obtain results intentionally is a new way of functioning; a new way of coordinating, which involves first creating an inner structure or image” (1997, p.23). In other words, the individual requires guidance towards a new ‘personality’ which provides them with the ability to fight for goals, the readiness for problem solving and the relevant tools that allow them to redirect their own activity and learning as an alternative (Medveczy, 2006). In this way the conductive programme offer’s up an alternative for the learner that transcends their current modus operandi.

The conductor offers the individual advanced models through the use of the task series to organise problem solving solutions and experiences, practised in variations and with increasing complexity (Hári, 1997). Bandura explains that;

“...through role-modelling, a learner observes what is modelled, creates a mental representation of it, reproduces what was modelled while monitoring their performance, and becomes motivated to incorporate the modelled behaviour in their work” (Sternsuz and Cruess, 2016, p.1257).

This easily corresponds to the use of intention and the task series. Firstly the individual receives demonstration and modelling from both the conductor herself, via the language of the task. These then provide a mental representation of the task for the learner. The execution of the task allows the individual to reproduce what was modelled with the use of the tools of prevention, feedback and facilitation by the conductor to allow them to monitor their performance.
Finally, the successful completion of the task provides motivation to incorporate the modelled behaviour in future. Engeström goes on to describe activity structures as following a process of expansive cycles (Engeström et al. 2003). This again resonates in the use of the complex task series and repeating daily routine within Conductive Education practice. The conscious intended action towards a given target facilitated by the task series provides the individual with feedback of information. This results in the active processing of the action and the subsequent feedback which alters further action thus creating a dynamic experience of activity (Hári, 1997).

In addition to the intention of the tasks the rhythmical element also provides an advanced model of movement and activity for the learners in Conductive Education. Tinning (2010) discusses pedagogy specifically within the context of human movement and in doing so considers that the body requires rhythm to develop physical competence. The rhythm is integral in helping the individual by facilitating control of the time and rhythm of the performance (Varga Kiss et al., 2002) and this ‘advanced model’ guides the learner towards synchronising intention and effective action.

To complete the comparisons above, the culturally advanced models offered to the learner within Conductive Education are found within that of the conductive group. The multiple and dynamic role of the group is discussed in greater detail below.

Critical to the learning environment in Conductive Education is that the conductor considers herself as an integral part of the conductive group. In doing so this opens up a dynamic two-way learning process within the classroom. “Directed learning experiences are transformed by the presence of a mediating agent....who guided by intention, culture and emotional involvement selects and organises the stimuli available to the child” (Sutton, 1990, p.5). Daniels describes invisible semiotic mediation as “…concerned with the tendencies to respond to situations in certain ways and how it puts about beliefs about the world one lives in” (2010, p.379). This description parallels with the idea of learning how to think and that of creating an orthofunctional learner who is self-realising and self-regulating (Hári, 1998, p.4). To return to the concept of a ‘cultural pedagogy’ then, the conductor sees herself as the mediating agent who introduces new ways to respond to situations into the learner’s activity and in doing so transforms his or her beliefs about the world.

There are seven methodological tools that a conductor has at her disposal as a mediator. These are rhythmical intention, observation, facilitation, the task series, the group, the daily routine and the learning environment all of which can be used in combination with the others in order to ensure that she is transformative in her teaching. As such, the conductor herself is the final methodological tool and ultimately the key to the success or failure of learning.

**The conductor as mediator**

Whilst not used explicitly within the everyday execution of Conductive Education, mediation could be seen to have pedagogical parallels with Conductive Education. As Hári clearly states “Conduction is mediation” (1997, p. 24). Whilst the conductor herself is the mediator a key mediating intervention is that of facilitation. Feuerstein described the mediating intervention as a specific human intervention which differs from simple stimulation as the mediator interposes between the individual and the stimuli in order that the individual will absorb the stimuli and become modified by them (Kozulin et al., 2010). Conductive facilitation aims to provide substitute strategies for the individual and encompasses a huge multitude...
of techniques. Whilst in no way a comprehensive list these include psychological (motivation, spontaneity, activity, confidence, responsibility, intention, relationships), educational (problem solving, goal-setting) and physiological facilitations (active fixation, rhythm, posture, prevention, feedback) (Hári, 1997).

Daniels (2010) describes the characteristic of both visible and invisible semiotic mediation. With visible mediation described as specific categories of reasoning, technical concepts and the physical phenomena of the world. One could assume that the tangible facilitations of equipment, the tasks and daily routine and posture, that are grouped as physiological facilitations could be considered as visible (or explicit) mediation. The abstract facilitations (grouped as educational and psychological facilitations) therefore lie in contrast as invisible semiotic mediation. These are concerned with the ways in which mental dispositions are influenced; “...tendencies to respond to situations in certain ways...” and “...belief systems about the world one lives in...” (Daniels, 2010, p.379). Interestingly Daniels specifies phenomena about the world in terms of both nature and culture leading to a neat correlation with Heys’ (2016) natural and cultural pedagogy. That is to say mediation could be extrapolated as necessary within both natural and cultural pedagogy.

Conclusion: The conductor as transformer

This theoretical analysis outlines aspects of the belief system considered, and key elements within Conductive Education. As Sutton (2016) defines;

“Conductive means ‘bringing together’ and applies here to the requirement for a unified, integrated approach to educating disabled children — and to bringing them up in the widest sense — to maximise the effects of teaching and learning” (Special World, 2016).

It is the conductor who is the mediating intervention in this ‘bringing together’.

The preceding consideration of the multiple elements of the Conductive Education methodology includes the task series, rhythmical intention, observation, facilitation, the group, the daily routine and the learning environment. The challenge for the author was in defining which element of the methodology could be considered within which theoretical backdrop. For example, the theories of activity put forward by Engeström, et al., (2003) and Daniels (2004) fell almost equally within all three areas of the process of Conductive Education; the conductor, the individual and the learning environment. It is apparent that this challenge arose since the philosophy of Conductive Education is truly holistic in its entirety. As such it is almost impossible to compartmentalise. In spite of the challenges of complexity when examining Conductive Education some valuable themes have emerged through this analysis. The process of Conductive Education is the practical-theoretical link. This process is comprised of three defined belief systems; belief about the individual, belief about the learning environment and belief about the conductor herself.

One of the strongest theoretical themes emerging within each of these beliefs was that of activity theory. The assertions of activity theory that is

“...learning how to draw on the resources of others to support ones actions and being able to offer oneself as a resource...’
to others... changes will need to attend to the development of new social practices which will sustain dispositions for joint engagement and transformation” (Edwards and Daniels, 2004, p. 109).

This holds a mirror to the intended intervention by a conductor in her group practice which led to consideration of Conductive Education practice from a socio-cultural perspective. This in turn intertwined with other detailed theoretical themes building on the ideas of Vygotskii and Feuerstein and the role of language and cultural elements of transformative pedagogy with specific focus on mediation.

When Sutton described the transformational pedagogy of Conductive Education over twenty-five years ago he stated this;

“Transformational pedagogy is disciplined in the best sense of the word, bringing order, rigour, and intensiveness to children’s education. It aims to make children happy to apply themselves, to learn, to achieve and to raise their goals” (Sutton, 1990, p. 6-7).

In every way this articulates what the conductor aims in her teaching. The one constant within the Conductive Education process is the prevailing role of the conductor. Her knowledge, experience and expertise allow the methodological tools of Conductive Education to be carried out successfully. “The conductor is with the entire group” (Maguire and Sutton, 2004, p. 51). She knows herself to be the catalyst for learning “…the most important, indeed the only, thing that we have to offer our students is ourselves” (Tosteson, 1979 in Stemsuz and Cruess 2016, p.1258). As demonstrated through this examination it is shown that the conductor believes deeply in the potential for change and has the pedagogical tools with which to bring about that change. The conductor is herself the tool of ‘conduction’ and as Hári (1997) states “orthofunction can be learned by discovery, guided by conduction” (p.23).

References


**Jules McDonald**

Jules is Head of Services at Rainbow House in Lancashire. J.mcdonald@thelegacy-rainbowhouse.com and Chair of the Professional body for conductors in the UK– the Professional Conductors Association info@cepeg.org.uk
Conductive Education (CE) has had a long history and been through many changes and generations. We also know, of course, that the world in which CE operates has changed and developed over time to suit systems of the host country (Bourke-Taylor et al; 2007). This means it is important to explore the context of development both within CE practice and in relation to the world for people with disabilities. This leads me to ask the questions: Has the ‘essence’ of CE been preserved? Has this also changed? Has the ‘baby been thrown out with the bathwater’?

In order to explore the fundamental principles of CE we need to go back in history to the founder Dr András Petö and his successor Dr Mária Hári. Between them they left a legacy which we can attribute to a philosophy of human potential; a belief that change can and will happen as long as the teaching and environment are appropriate (Hári & Akos, 1971). In order to achieve this they passed on a ‘living practice’ to generations of conductors. This practice is now established worldwide for both children and adults with neurological disabilities. However as Walt Disney says: “Progress is impossible without change”

I started my training as a conductor 30 years ago and in that time have witnessed many changes in CE practice. Some of these are in relation to wider societal changes and some a direct response of conductors own development. Below is a brief overview of some of the most significant changes I have witnessed along my journey:-

Globalisation – CE being delivered in different contexts; each country ‘designing’ their own practice

Type of placement – a move from full time residential to day placements, part-time provision, summer schools, intermittent input in homes, schools and/or centres

Professionals delivering CE – move from conductor only teams to multi-disciplinary teams; frequently with each professional having different levels of training and experience in the system of CE

Equipment – there is a greater range of equipment available and used for people with disabilities. Equipment now routinely being used to both ‘replace’ and ‘enhance’ learning

Social access and the rights of people with disabilities – promoting changes in the skills needed to become integrated into society e.g. social media

Training of conductors – various length and types of training according to national requirements and opportunities of the host country

Understanding of the human brain and how we learn – new science around neuroplasticity and the potential of the learning brain

All of these factors have to be taken into consideration by conductors. New knowledge is important as it helps us to develop our practice and equally may help to place CE in a more modern context. There is a large amount of research being carried out in
areas which could frame CE practice in a theoretical context - can we use this to justify the CE approach? Should we change and adapt CE to meet the evidence available? All of these are daily questions for conductors and challenge the delivery of this system.

The danger of exploring new research, taking on new ideas and developing practice in isolation is the potential for the CE ‘baby’ to be lost and thrown out with the ‘bathwater’. There has been a recent move to explain CE in terms of the development of motor skills - does this move CE into a different field? How do we know? Potentially we need to clearly identify the ‘baby’ and then consider all new knowledge and developments in the light of this. Unfortunately as CE is a practice working to ‘survive’ in current economic climates attention is rarely paid to this. There does not appear to be one leader in the field who is developing the ‘baby’ and leading change and development. This leads to a fractious development of individual or national practice and CE being placed in different contexts. Some may see this as essential if CE is to survive however does the identity of CE get lost in this process?

Is CE – “motor development”; “development of neural pathways”; “teaching and learning”; “a methodology”; “a belief”? Is it indeed all of these?

If we return to the Human Principle of CE (Hári, 1990) then we can discover some fundamental principles which form a bed rock for practice:

- Everyone can learn irrespective of their starting point
- We learn ‘in order to’ not ‘because of’
- Teaching stays ahead of and creates development
- The conductor is a catalyst in the learning process

The first step to belief in the person:

In our modern day quest to measure ability we frequently forget or ignore the concept of potential. Potential is seen as ‘impossible’ to measure or record and as such often placed into a background which we shouldn’t talk about! As a conductor we are constantly seeking potential; what the person can do with help and to some degree less interested in measuring ability. However in our modern day context the end point of teaching is usually the level of ability; in CE, I would argue, that this is where we start. The child doesn’t bring potential into the world with them; it is created, nurtured and developed through the system of CE. I believe that this is the ‘baby’ and that makes CE different to other systems and because we can’t ‘measure it’ with traditional assessment methods it is forgotten, ignored and more importantly not seen as significant!

We talk a great deal about ‘independence’ – what a person can do alone however this is not potential. Potential is what you can’t do alone: a new ability to be achieved, one you never thought possible. It cannot be calculated; it cannot always be predicted and yet it is the goal of CE. In order to create potential the conductor needs to take calculated risks (in a society which wishes to constantly reduce risk);
the conductor needs to create new intention in the person; guide the person to exploring what is possible instead of what is known – ultimately the creation of the all-important orthofunctional personality (Hári & Ákos, 1971).

If this is the baby, and this is only my opinion, then what is the bathwater? What can and should be changed? Methodology, equipment, delivery? Can conductors learn from new knowledge of how to create intention through teaching? What is clear is that no change is not an option either!

My professional experience has shown me that CE can and should develop however that this should be done with an air of caution. In the drive to justify CE through clinical research or to sustain CE services economically or perhaps to ‘fit’ CE into existing practices are we at risk of losing the belief and concept of human potential. If you are working in CE are you clear what is the ‘baby’ and what is the ‘bathwater’ – can changes and development be justified in the context of the legacy we inherited?

These are questions which must now be addressed by every conductor to ensure clear, structured progress and development of the system of CE in the future.

References


Dr Melanie R Brown
CEO/ Senior Conductor
National Institute of Conductive Education (NICE)
Birmingham
UK