

CONDUCTIVE
★ COLLEGE ★

JOURNAL

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NICE – Centre for Movement Disorders

Transforming the lives of children and adults with incurable movement disorders.

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★ CONTENTS ★

3 CONDUCTIVE COLLEGE NEWS

4 EDITORIAL

5 HOW LOCKDOWN AFFECTED MY CONDUCTIVE JOURNEY AS A FIRST YEAR STUDENT

Lucy Meredith

6 THE DIARIES OF A GREYING CONDUCTOR DURING A PANDEMIC

Annamaria Berger-Jones

12 REFLECTION ON PROVIDING REMOTE ADULT CONDUCTIVE EDUCATION SERVICES DURING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

Jules McDonald And Emma Parker

18 CONDUCTING, TRAINING, LEARNING: REFLECTION THROUGH THREE LENSES OF DIGITAL LEARNING AND TEACHING

Brittany Jennings

25 RESEARCH

Briana Campbell

31 MASTERS LEVEL STUDY

Lucy Barraclough

35 BOOK REVIEW: BREATH

James Nestor. Penguin Life (2020)

★ CONDUCTIVE COLLEGE NEWS ★

Lectures will be delivered in keeping with the current context, but remote delivery will be an option for all training days and courses

CPD INITIATIVE FROM NICE CONDUCTIVE COLLEGE FOR 2020-21

The following Zoom delivered sessions create opportunity for conductors, both within the UK, and abroad, to engage in a CPD package of 4 distinct, but connected blocks across the academic year. The overall aim is to create opportunity for conductors to analyse and reconsider some key CE principles and core professional skills: Orthofunctionality, 'Holism', Reflexivity & Criticality, and 'Communicating your Professional Message'. Each block will be certificated, and awarded 8 hours CPD (PCA recommendation is 25 hours CPD per year).

Block 1. **Orthofunctionality as a mindframe for learning?**

November 3rd, 10th, 17th, and 8th December
suggested timings GMT 7.00-8.00pm

Block 2. **Orthofunctionality and 'holistic' practice**

January 19th, 26th February 2nd and March
2nd suggested timings GMT 7.00-8.00pm

Block 3. **Developing our reflectivity and critical analysis**

March, 23rd, 30th and April 20th, 27th
suggested timings GMT 7.00-8.00pm

Block 4. **Communicating our professional perspectives with others**

May 11th, 18th, 25th and June 22nd
suggested timings GMT 7.00-8.00pm

STAND ALONE CPD DAYS:

These will be announced throughout the year, and will cover some of the basics of practice such as

- The significance of the group,
- The role of the facilitator in the team,
- Observing for potential,
- Enabling learning and
- Use of rhythmical intention to assist learning

OTHER ONGOING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES:

Multi-Disciplinary Conductor Training.

This is a practice-based course suitable for those already with a Degree. Training is delivered across four blocks, and enables the student to achieve the Qualified Conductor Status. This is best suited for those who wish to pursue a career in CE, and who are already working in a CE Centre.

OCN Levels 3 & 4.

It will soon be possible to enrol on a Level 4 OCN Course. This will be delivered by the Conductive College, and will provide Conductor Assistants with the necessary information and guidance to deliver part of the complex programme; for example the lying, or sitting programmes. This course may also enable the student who would wish to progress to the BA in CE to gain credits at level 4.

If you would like to be part of these initiatives from the Conductive College, or would just like more information about training options, please contact Marie McCann at MMcCann@conductive-education.org.uk

★ EDITORIAL ★

This third edition of the Conductive College Journal is a huge achievement in times of unprecedented challenge and constraint. The contributors to this edition deserve praise for not only being able to submit work, but to be able to demonstrate learning over this time.



adult participants digitally. This gave me the unexpected opportunity to reconsider breathing as a skill that might be usefully taught to participants with MS, stroke or Head injury. These sessions have been a revelation at many levels, and forced me to consider not only the role of breathing in everyday life, never mind CE sessions, but also to read the book **BREATH** by James Nestor. This book is reviewed and included at the end of this edition. We hope you enjoy this edition of the Conductive College Journal, and use what you read to help you reflect upon your own experiences over this time, and in particular what CE means to you. Wishing you well for a safe and happy 2020-21.

Dr. Theresa Kinnersley

Learning and reflection are significant positives of this third edition. Contributors have been able to reflect upon the positives, and the challenges at both professional and personal levels. This edition serves to document some of the challenges faced; to help us as individuals to identify what is important in our role as Conductors, and to reflect upon the priorities in our professional and personal lives. The stories documented in this edition range from a first year student's reflection upon CE, and its impact upon her at this time, to the reflections of Conductors with many years' experience upon the delivery of CE via digital platforms. We have also been able to include a research article by one of our recent graduates on Makaton in CE sessions, and an edited assignment from a Conductor currently undertaking the MA in CE at BCU. At a personal level, I have been fortunate enough to be able to support some



★ COVID-19 SPECIFIC ARTICLES ★

How Lockdown Affected My Conductive Journey as a First Year Student

Lucy Meredith

At the beginning of September I started the journey of becoming a Conductor. For me completing my first semester was a big achievement. My passion for Conductive Education grew and I was eager to begin semester two. Unfortunately due to Covid-19 the plan for year did not quite work out as the UK went into lockdown in March. When this happened I personally felt disheartened and worried as I had just started to build up my confidence in practice and was unsure how this would impact on first year.

Despite not knowing how first year was going to end, Birmingham City University, and NICE Conductive College adapted to the situation quickly and as a year group we were still able to complete our lectures online.

Without realising, studying Conductive Education personally helped me be able to adapt to the change positively. In my short time of studying Conductive Education every Conductor I have met along the way has had such a positive attitude. In groups I have facilitated in, Conductors have always demonstrated the ability to adapt to change quickly. Ensuring the participants achieve the best outcome in the session they are in even if it isn't what the conductor had planned for. While in Lockdown I began to think with this mind-set that although Covid-19 changed what was planned for in Semester Two, there were still so many ways to learn and improve for when I eventually go back into placement.

Using the Internet regularly became the norm for the majority of people in lockdown. Previously

I mentioned that placement was cut short. Although being in lockdown came with its disadvantages one of the main advantages was having free time. This gave me the opportunity to discover Conductive Education settings not only in the UK but also abroad online. Many centres began to post on their Social Media sites regularly to show their participants or their participant's parents and carers and how they can carry out Conductive Education at home. As a student this helped me massively with completing my assignments. I benefited from watching a variety of different conductors and used this as tool to teach me new techniques and think about new ideas on how I could improve when I go back into practice.

Overall, when I began my journey of becoming a conductor I never thought I would be a student studying through a Pandemic. At the beginning of lockdown there were so many questions about how Covid-19 would affect my journey and if I would even be able to complete 1st year. With the help of my lecturers, second and third year students, my practice tutors and even Conductive Education centres across the world I completed first year. Although there is still so much uncertainty about Covid-19, my passion for Conductive Education is even stronger and I am eager to begin second year and continue my journey of becoming a conductor no matter the circumstances.

Lucy Meredith is a first year student on the BA in CE/ QCS course at Birmingham City University/ NICE Conductive College. Lucy Meredith: lucy_meredith05@outlook.com

THE DIARIES OF A GREYING CONDUCTOR DURING A PANDEMIC

Annamaria Berger-Jones

Monday 23 March 2020

I am driving to work with a heavy heart and a head full of uncertainty. I made the decision to suspend sessions for the time being after today as there is more and more bad news about this COVID-19 virus... I already reduced group sizes in order to keep a bigger distance between participants. What is going on?! No one seems to know.

Tuesday 24 March 2020

'Lockdown' was announced by the PM last night, we are to stay in our homes. But he is not saying how long for... What does this mean for my business? How can I continue to support my participants and their families during this new but clearly very uncertain time? Anxiety tends to exacerbate symptoms, which will create further problems to those already finding life complicated to enjoy and cope with on occasions.

Right, time to take a leap and start something perhaps a little questionable. I send a letter to all my Parkinson's participants offering them the option to 'go digital'. It is not a delivery method I have ever engaged with or even thought possible. Yet, I feel I must act fast and tackle this situation head on.

Wednesday 25 -
Sunday 29 March 2020

Conductive education (CE) has a strong philosophy as well as a firm methodology. To me, our philosophy is unshakable; for example my belief in people's potential is entrenched, so it was not something I felt I needed to ponder over at this stage. My attention turned more to the methodology, which includes: the conductor, observation, facilitation, rhythmical intention, the learning environment, task series (TS), daily routine (DR) and the group (PCA, 2009). I considered each of these in detail and the ways they might need adjusting for digitalisation. I concluded that the DR would need to be shortened from an hour and half, so making changes to the TS will be inevitable. The learning environment in its physical sense would be people's homes, but the atmosphere and how individuals feel within it would still be created by me. I decided that in order to get sessions started sooner and to make the logistics of organising it all easier, I would offer sessions on an individual rather than group basis.

Alongside the above, practical issues had to be considered, such as participants having access to a device with a camera and microphone, their download speed, their knowledge and confidence of using various digital platforms and having enough space in a room to move safely. I decided that it would be simpler to use whatever application people are comfortable with rather than expecting them

to learn to use an unfamiliar one. Technology became important, as I wanted to offer 'live real-time' sessions rather than recordings.

One thing I knew for sure, I needed to 'see', in order to be able to observe the person from head to toe. Conductive observation is continuous and is key in everything we do as it allows the conductor to give additional information to the participant to ensure learning can take place (Maguire & Sutton, 2004). I wanted the whole body to fit into the frame. This of course required careful setting up. I spent my evenings and weekend offering free set up slots to participants to ensure that they had the correct positioning of the device and the right distance between the device and themselves. At times, this was rather comical, but we always got there in the end. This meant that when it came to their first actual digital session everything was set up and ready to go.

Week 2 of Lockdown

I was offering CE two days a week. I started with 6 digital sessions and continued with more set up slots. This is what it looked like: I offered a 30 minutes input on individual basis via FaceTime, Zoom, Skype or Messenger. Starting in a sitting position, focusing on increasing range of movement, improving initiation and fluency of movement, co-ordination as well as fine manipulation skills. The programme also included postural elements and preparation for walking, followed by movements in standing and finishing off with some actual walking (even if it was only on the spot). Concerns regarding safety were overcome with the use of a chair for support or having the spouse in the room or nearby in case their help was needed. We had a lot to cover in half an hour but it seemed possible to do! I felt this could actually work. Individuals were able to absorb information, move better by the end and had a smile on their faces. There was always extra time too for

a chat and to give some reassurance, which was very much needed as well as appreciated by both the participants and their spouses.

Week 3 of Lockdown

More participants joined; my numbers are now up to 9. CE is all about problem solving and adaptability, ultimately the aim is for the learner to become an active problem-solver, to feel confident and to take ownership of their newly learnt or regained skills (Maguire & Sutton, 2004; Read, 1990). The individuals I have the privilege to work with were demonstrating just this; embracing yet another new challenge and tackling it with motivation. How is this motivation created? Hári (2008) described the conductor as the main type of facilitation. It is the conductor's job to create interest as well as intention through activation and goal setting ultimately guiding the learner to their own solution. Through conduction this is possible, as the conductor enables the person to solve a problem the best way possible according to their specific circumstances. According to Hári (Maguire & Sutton, 2004) in CE our teaching is always concerned with guiding the person, it is a pedagogy, which to me makes CE transformative.

Week 5 of Lockdown

The numbers of people accessing digital sessions have increased to 10. They all report enjoying and looking forward to their 'CE time'. Most join weekly some attend on a fortnightly basis. It is great to be able to see so many of my participants, but I do miss the group and the social learning element of CE. The benefit of working in a group can include: people learning from each other, comparing themselves and

copying movements in case they missed the instruction (Maguire & Sutton, 2004). Being part of a group can foster positive emotions, people with the same diagnosis can support each other with tips and discuss common problems (Brown & Mikula-Tóth, 1997). I was pleased to learn that many of my 'regulars' have been in touch with each other to do just that over the phone as the next best thing. It shows that relationships created in the conductive group can be transferred and made the most of! Some important points however have arisen due to working on an individual basis, as opposed to in the group setting. For example during our one-to-one sessions, one of my ladies said that she finds it easier to ask me to repeat something she missed. Not wanting to disrupt the flow of the group, she would not have done this under 'normal' circumstances. Understanding a task is imperative as it aids awareness of expectation and therefore increases willingness to carry said task out (Maguire & Sutton, 2004).

Week 7 of Lockdown

I now see 14 people with Parkinson's, 12 each week. Hári stresses the importance of the observation skills of conductors (Maguire & Sutton, 2004). I have been relying heavily upon my observation skills as well as my knowledge of my individuals and their condition. At times, even with people's best efforts, the frame I can see is not complete; there might be a hand I cannot see when stretched above the head or a foot missing once stepped forward. However, even without being able to see a specific body part, I know, from previous observation, what it might or might not be doing allowing me to give appropriate prevention before the movement or the required correction on completion of a task. What this also encourages is furthering participants' and their spouses' trust invested in their conductor, as they ask: 'how do you know if you can't see it?'. I believe this to be

a true testament of conductive observation being a very powerful and effective part of CE methodology as it allows the conductor to really guide individuals to learning. The impact of this on my observation skills, and myself reinforces the importance of the 'whole'. Seeing the person as a complex interconnected system within their own context has been key in increasing my understanding and ability to meaningfully lead them to becoming orthofunctional. I would argue that the aim of CE is to develop an individual as whole person so they can become active and creative in the way they approach and problem-solve their difficulties. It is about changing people's mind-sets. This experience has also challenged my perception of holism. My 'view' of the person might have become two dimensional suddenly yet the picture has grown a lot wider and deeper. Suddenly, it does not just mean seeing the person as a 'whole', rather it has spread to their environmental context as well. In this way I have also been able to reconsider the human principle; that dynamic between the conductor, the participant and their environment.

Week 9 of Lockdown

Even under non-pandemic circumstances, having regular sessions give people structure. Albeit I only do a half an hour DR, I am still able to offer something that is planned and focused and based on my observations of each individual (Maguire & Sutton, 2004). Participants put everything into to their 30 minutes with me. The length seems to be just right. People find their sessions very focused and as such rather tiring; so it could not be any longer. But the duration still allows me to include opportunities for learning in different positions. All the tasks we carry out are specifically selected to promote conscious control and functional possibilities (Maguire & Sutton, 2004). This can be achieved through the unique connection between the setting of aims and delivery of

tasks created and facilitated by the conductors (Zsebe, 2019). My revised TS give numerous learning opportunities and includes transferable skills actually using 'equipment' found in people's homes (PCA, 2009). All of which is completely feasible in this new digital set up.

Week 11 of Lockdown

Some of my participants are enjoying not having to endure the journey to my setting yet still being able to benefit from CE. Learning can be and should be made enjoyable whether it is in person or through a screen; that is my motto for sure. Hári emphasises the importance of starting each sessions by creating a pleasant atmosphere (Maguire & Sutton, 2004). It has been insightful to see people in their home environments as I feel seeing how they move around and what restrictions they might have in terms of space and type of furniture can further inform my teaching and its focus. I have been in living rooms, spare rooms, bedroom, studies, kitchens, dining room, conservatories, gardens and even a garage. What Hári (2014) describes as the Human Principle – the connection between the person with the motor disorder, the conductor and the learning environment, as a philosophy, is not actually effected by digital delivery. The environment might be different for each person but the learning element of it is unchanged. The conductor's belief in people's potential to learn regardless of their age, ability or diagnosed condition is unchanged even when they are not face to face. (Medveczky, 2006; Hári, 1997). My digital CE experiences have definitely strengthened my view of the power and the importance of the Human Principle in my practice. The conductor continues to have a positive outlook and looks for ability in order to enable people to experience success no matter where they may be (Brown, 2006). I can still set achievable and realistic yet challenging aims for my participants to work towards

(Kollega, 2014; Brown & Mikula-Tóth, 1997). These are then achieved and learning takes place in a fun and dynamic way (Hári, 1997).

Week 13 of Lockdown

A positive aspect of lockdown to mention is the fact that spouses are getting more involved. This is great on more than one level. Hearing the preparation given in order to carry out movements successfully (such as getting ready to stand up) and experiencing its success encourages spouses to use these themselves. They can ask me questions so they are gaining understanding of the condition from a professional's perspective and can pick up specific techniques or cues to use with their partners. All of which can make everyday challenges more manageable at home. In moving forward and returning back to face-to-face CE this new and valuable insight is an aspect that will inform what and how I deliver sessions.

Of course there have been a number of trials too. Technology being one, the worst I had, was losing connection every two minutes. More importantly, I truly miss being able to do the lying programme. As it does provide preparation and offers the ideal starting position to get the brain and the body ready for the rest of the session. Without it, the foundations are not as straight forward to achieve. In CE everything is connected and without the success achieved in a lying position, the results reached in the other positions might not be as great (Maguire & Sutton, 2004). I looked upon this as a challenge to overcome (I like to practice what I preach and demonstrate problem-solving!).

I broke down tasks more than usual at the start of the sitting programme giving the brain and body the extra preparation and time required in the absence of the lying programme.

Week 15 of Lockdown

The perhaps most observed aspect of CE by others is manual facilitation; this, of course, cannot be provided by the conductor digitally. Yet, facilitation can still be given. It must be remembered that in a conductor's toolbox we also have educational, psychological and other types of physiological facilitation too. The role of prevention, correction, tone of voice and praise, I feel, are in the spotlight with digital delivery! Our facilitation, as always, is guided by our observations with the aim to create intention whether in person or on screen (Maguire & Sutton, 2004). Willingness and success can be ensured through our facilitation without a doubt! Someone's potential becomes no less just because we are not able to see them face-to-face; learning can still be conscious and active (PCA, 2009). Fostering consistently high expectations and demonstrating to a person what they are capable of accomplishing is giving them what Hári calls Intelligent Love (Maguire & Sutton, 2004).

Week 16 of Lockdown

As I write this reflecting on my lockdown experience I cannot stop but marvel at the genius of CE. Its unapologetic philosophy stands the test of time; it is transferable, just as is what it is teaching. I picked three elements of CE that have reinforced the approaches' transformative nature during this time.

- The fact that potential is not only limitless but is also without boundaries. The conductor's firm belief in the individual's ability to learn is not only regardless of age, ability or condition but also method of delivery. As long as 'conduction' is present learning occurs.
- The Human Principle as a philosophy is simply magical. I picture it as a triangle with three points, the conductor, the person and the learning environment. These points are strongly connected and have a direct impact on each other. I have learnt that this triangle is not a rigid shape, it gives the angles some flexibility to change and alter. The dynamics might shift but the triangle remains.
- I have always put high value on conductive observation, but the time of digital delivery really confirmed for me that my observations truly and completely guide everything that I do! Observation informs planning and structuring the programme, which then leads the setting of aims. All facilitation relies on what the conductor sees. Conductive observation is intensive, dynamic, complex, meaningful and integral to our work.

Good professional practice should always be further informed through reflexivity (Bolton, 2010). Ironically reflecting becomes harder with the years of practical experience gained. The challenge is to make the familiar strange, in order to step back and critique what we do day-to-day. Analysing and evaluating what I do and why I do it for quality assurance and enhancement are important factors for me. I am passionate about CE, I want to safeguard it for the next generation to me that means staying true to its essence and strong pedagogy. It is important to keep the conversation going about what CE is and how conduction can happen. The mission is, seeing its potential, taking the challenges the context or the environment might throw in our way and problem solving these in true CE style.

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REFLECTION ON PROVIDING REMOTE ADULT CONDUCTIVE EDUCATION SERVICES DURING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

Jules McDonald and Emma Parker

Abstract

Jules McDonald and Emma Parker provide the adult Conductive Education services at Paces in Sheffield. During the Covid-19 lockdown they provided remote Conductive Education services to their adult participants which included individual video-call CE sessions and online active movement sessions. Here they detail their expectations, experiences and reflections on the 5-month period and what it might mean to them, their services and wider conductive practice in future.

Introduction

Emma runs the 'Leaping the Void' provision that delivers CE input across the daily routine both formally (through structured programmes) and informally (through expert facilitation and assistance during all parts of the day) within an adult day provision. Jules runs the adult sessional services at Paces: providing regular, flexible CE in both individual and diagnosis-specific group sessions. She also runs her own private CE service; Connections Neuro-Disability Services which provide individual CE services, advice and consultancy across the age-range. This opportunity means that she is able to pull on a wide range of experience.

The 'lockdown' offer

In March 2020, when the national lockdown was imposed, Paces Adult Services and Connections Neuro-Disability services, like other CE settings across the country, were forced to close their doors to face to face delivery. At this point we had no idea of how long this would be for. The immediate concern for us as conductors was the instant lack of support that our participants would be subject to. Following discussions between ourselves, and with the senior management team at Paces, we made the decision to immediately initiate remote support for our regular participants. Our 'Distance CE' offer consisted of the following:

1. Emails/Phone calls/WhatsApp/Messenger Conversations as individuals and as groups
2. Written Homework Programmes
3. CE sessions provided by Video-call

One other idea was also put forward:

4. Online sessions for a wider audience for people to 'join in' at home

We both had very mixed feelings about our remote offer. Not least because it was a turbulent time for everyone, and emotions were high due to the wider situation with the Pandemic. However, we were happy that supporting the participants with information and regular contact was important as a minimum.

Calls, text and chat groups

In order to enable us to call, text and set up chat groups we had to make an immediate decision to share our personal contacts with the participants. In the past, we had both kept our personal contact details separate from our professional ones. However, it felt immediately important to make contact of any kind with the participants in the easiest way possible for them. This resulted in requesting participants as 'Facebook friends' for example and giving them our personal phone numbers. We discussed this as a team at the time and agreed it was appropriate given the circumstances. We chose this as we were aware that many of our participants used these methods of communication already, and did so much more readily than email. We felt this was therefore the easiest and most immediate way to make contact and stay in touch.

The support using these methods felt positive from the start most notably for the participants and families in the day services. Many of them had formed long-term relationships with the Paces staff (and each other), and this allowed comfortable and relaxed chat and support. On the whole the group chat was used more for fun and distraction with activities such as bingo, Easter bonnet competitions and so on. As the period of lockdown extended however the individual contact in the form of texts and phone-calls became increasingly valuable across the board, particularly to those who did not take up the offer of virtual sessions. Support and contact is perceived an essential aspect of our work as conductors, and contributes to the holistic benefit of our services. This translated fairly easily into our remote offer.

The matter of sharing our personal information and be more contactable by participants was however, double-edged for us at times. It made it difficult for us to cut-off from work and there was a feeling of responsibility to ensure we kept active and in-touch with our participants as much as

possible. This responsibility for our participants weighed on us more heavily than usual during the lockdown period than it does during our 'normal' working life. However, we both generally managed to strike a better balance with this over time as we adjusted to this new way of working. With the benefit of hindsight, we might consider creating professional profiles on social media or creating social media groups or pages to facilitate communication whilst managing to maintain more professional distance. This will be considered long term in any future distance offer planning.

Homework Programmes

When it came to writing 'homework' programmes we were both, again, happy that these could be written fairly easily and updated as needed. We both had experience of writing such programmes in the past and whilst we were happy to compile them, we were both aware that their effectiveness was limited. We felt that the very nature of the homework programmes somewhat 'misses the point' of ingraining a conductive philosophy into your everyday life and not just into some practicing of tasks. Similarly, we both felt we should reduce the level of the tasks in order to maintain the safety of the participants and those helping them. However, all of the participants that we were supporting remotely had long-term experience of CE and were familiar with their usual tasks series and so on balance we felt the if they were to be following a list of activities/tasks at home this would be certainly better than them doing nothing at all which was possibly the alternative for many.

In a practical sense once, each participant had been given their homework programme, we did not do a great deal more with the plans. Most of the participants soon began accessing video-CE sessions and so the homework programmes became a supplement to those

individuals. The programmes made a useful reference point on occasions for us to relate back to when discussing movements with the participants. We did have a little feedback at first with the programmes in which participants were asking questions and problem-solving some of the tasks however, as anticipated, overall the programmes were limited in their effectiveness.

Video CE Sessions

When it came to offering CE sessions via video both of us were quite sceptical at the offset. There were practical reasons for this. Jules working with older participants was unsure about the realities of managing the technology required for the sessions and having only recently begun working with Paces had only met the participants a couple of times and so was unsure of both their willingness to try the sessions with a 'new' person and her ability to provide effective CE for people she didn't really know. Emma, by contrast was concerned with the fact that most of her day-service participants had fairly complex needs. This left her with dual concerns: firstly, would she be able to engage them via video at all? Secondly, who would be able to facilitate them and how would she help them to do so? In addition to this some of Emma's participants were in supported living and she was concerned how a video session would be received by the staff in those settings who knew nothing about CE. She was nervous that we might be selling ourselves short by saying we could do an online session when it would be lacking in many of the fundamentals of CE i.e. The group, facilitation etc... We were both essentially not sure if CE would work over a video call... but the circumstances around us left us with no other options so we were both prepared to give it a try.

We offered individual sessions to each participant. However, with hindsight we would certainly consider the idea of group sessions for some individuals. Of course, individual sessions

brought a lot in terms of personalised focus to the sessions and in particular allowed us to guide those facilitating carefully if needed. However, for some sessions when the tasks series were similar and the participants more mobile it was extremely tiring to provide multiple similar sessions in succession. In addition many of the sessional participants became more technologically proficient during lockdown (didn't we all?) and so would now be able to manage an online group session more easily and equally would really have benefitted socially from seeing their other group members. Of course, it makes sense, upon reflection that the group methodology could be translated online, however, our rush to get started and our concerns about the technology set us on an individual session path.

In all honesty we both went into the video sessions with the aim of maintaining the skills of the participants at the level they were when lockdown began. The concern being that they would be less active without their regular CE sessions and this would have a negative impact. We both quickly realised that we should have known better! We all read 'Dina' whilst training as conductors and of course there need be no more proof that 'distance' CE can work if properly applied (Ákos & Ákos,1991). We were thrilled to see many of the participants make notable improvements. This was almost certainly a result of two main factors: Firstly, the need to engage the family members and carers in the sessions meant that we really did educate them 'conductively' in a much more meaningful and practical sense than we had achieved in person. Secondly, the less rigorous, but more repetitive daily routine of lockdown allowed people to spend time trying things, to problem solve in their own home and with their own family in a way that they perhaps had never had the opportunity to do before.

The video-sessions also made us seriously consider the methodological elements of our practice. In particular it forced us to use some of them more (e.g. observation) and restricting

Active Movement Sessions

our use of others (e.g. manual facilitation). We both feel this has been of great benefit to our professional development. The screen dividing you from the participant has forced us to take more time and care in our observations and allowed us to wait more and not simply 'act' with the input of manual facilitation as we might have done in person. Observation was not without its challenges though. It was sometimes hard to 'get' someone's whole body on screen and the inability to move around and see someone in 3D meant that sometimes you had to accept a lower quality of performance of a task or 'missed' seeing the true posture of an individual etc...

We have relied more consistently and heavily on the use of prevention and correction as well as rhythmical intention in guiding the task. This has enabled the participants and their families to see greater value in these things. For example, we both regularly observed family members or carers verbally correcting, or counting, for their loved ones as they became more confident and skilled in assisting them.

The practicalities of a task series were also a factor. For many of the adult stroke participants in Jules' sessions, lying down was impractical or difficult to manage and so the lying programme was only used in some sessions for some people. Jules reflected that this has forced her to increase her knowledge and creativity in a wider variety of sitting and standing tasks. Similarly providing wheelchair based sitting tasks for some of Emma's participants allowed her to demonstrate to others that being sat in a wheelchair was not a restrictor to sitting in a good position and keeping your body active. The concerns Emma had regarding engaging Supported Living Staff in the online sessions were ultimately unnecessary. She reflected that in fact the situation allowed the staff to see how much the participants enjoyed and how much they could actually do, even though she was actually asking them to do less than she would have done in person. These participants really wanted to work hard and achieve and were very motivated which was so gratifying for all concerned.

The active movement sessions were a controversial idea from the start. They were initially proposed by a member of the senior management at Paces. Emma was more reticent than Jules of the suggestion and in all honesty, it was quite 'controversial' within the team as a whole. Jules' feelings changed a little as the period of lockdown progressed, she had a strong feeling of needing to act and provide something of value to people during a time when it was so difficult to 'do' anything. This feeling of helplessness pushed her into considering the idea more seriously and eventually initiating more detailed discussions into the practicalities of it.

By consulting with the marketing/publicity staff at Paces it was considered that offering any kind of 'live' session would have a number of practical constraints (time, staff availability etc...) and risks (not going to plan, providing disclaimers etc...). Therefore, a pre-recorded video was suggested as the most suitable format.

More complex than these practical elements were those of the how the idea sat within the context of CE and how they would be received by the wider CE community. As a team of conductors, we spent time discussing this in great depth before agreeing to a pilot video being made. The main area of discussion was that providing a 'follow at home' video was not Conductive Education since it lacked the crucial two-way inter-personal process of learning. It was therefore regarded as important that it was clear that the videos were not CE but an offer to help people to keep active. However, it was also considered that since the proposal was that the videos would be hosted by a conductor that they would follow some of the familiar elements of CE such as tasks and rhythmical intention in order to make them demonstrably different to 'other' online movement sessions and to make them more

valuable to individuals who were familiar with CE already. Once Jules had made a pilot video we again reviewed and discussed this as conductors across the organisation before agreeing to a launch and subsequent weekly 'episodes'.

We were absolutely thrilled when the sessions were launched that they were visibly received well by individuals both within and outside of the CE community. We have not heard anything negative about them although we are sure some may not regard them well. The statistics harvested from the videos suggest that in total they may have reached over 6000 people. Of course, many will not have watched more than a couple of seconds, if that, however around 1500 people watched the videos for more than 10 seconds. We have had some anecdotal feedback from individuals using the videos between or in place of virtual CE sessions as well as them being used by individuals who have never participated in CE and finding them of value. Overall, we produced 8 active movement sessions working across basic and moderate levels in lying, sitting and standing.

Having discussed the videos reflectively as conductors we wonder if they were received with an open mind by the CE community as a result of the covid-19 pandemic. In so much as we think it is possible that with the changing of CE to virtual provision for so many people this may have helped conductors to be more open-minded to the idea of other offers than they may have been in 'usual' times. It may be an outdated concern to think that conductors continue to be critical of each other in whether or not they are providing 'true' Conductive Education, however, we both as conductors know that many of our peers continue to feel like this is the case even if it is not.

On reflection we feel pleased to have produced these videos and actually feel that they form a good 'stock' of information which we now have at our disposal for the future. They could be used to enhance a CE offer for people who only access CE on a short-block or sessional basis as well as being used by fundraisers and management to give an 'impression' of CE as a starting point.

Conclusion

Across our services we undertook around 180 hours of video CE sessions and supported 21 individuals across the 5 months from the end of March till the end of August. During August, Emma began a phased re-opening of the adult day services, initially for 2 days a week. Jules also began to reopen her face-to-face sessions with her private clients. At this point it felt appropriate to reflect on the past few months and consider what it might mean for practice and the profession moving forward.

In all honesty we both experienced big highs but also significant lows in our working life over the past few months. Not least as we were both juggling working from home with looking after young families. There have been

emotional moments of both joy and sadness. Frustration at time that we could not climb into the screen to help someone in person but also real joy at seeing the participants and families grow and learn together. The process of providing CE at a distance has bizarrely bought us closer to our participants. They have opened a window into their home and their everyday lives, and we in turn have done the same to them. Similarly, it has bought us together as conductors as we have faced the challenging times together. We believe that all of the individuals who received the video sessions would be in much worse positions now without them, both physically and mentally. Although anecdotal proof we know that some of the participants who did not





access these sessions have experienced more difficulties during lockdown.

Our distance CE offer has kept our participants motivated and they have continued to feel they are a part of something even though they were physically distanced. More than anything it simply showed that we cared.

We hope that the experience of providing remote services during lockdown leaves it's legacy in three ways. Firstly, we have already begun planning for maintaining and developing a more robust long-term remote service offer for our adults. In the long term we hope this, in combination with face-to-face provision will allow more flexibility to access CE. We hope this encourages individuals who do not necessarily live near a CE provider to be able to consider accessing services without the need to travel.

Secondly, we really hope we can retain what we have learnt about our own practice; to observe more sensitively, to use prevention and correction to greater effect, to extol the value of rhythmical intention, to be cautious in returning to manual facilitation and to truly work towards engaging partners and families fully in the conductive ethos for everyone's benefit.

The final legacy of these past few months will be in our renewed belief in the power of Conductive Education. This time has proven that the truly person-centred, holistic power of CE teaching and learning is not constrained by the need to physically be present in the same place and has given us hope that CE can continue to grow and adapt in a changing, technologically-driven world whilst not losing either its essence or its impact.

Reference: Ákos, K and Ákos, M. (1991) Dina: A mother practises Conductive Education Edited by Gabriele Haug. Birmingham. Foundation for Conductive Education.

Jules McDonald

Jules qualified as a conductor at NICE in 2004. She worked briefly in Canada before spending 15 years at Rainbow House (now Rainbow Hub) in Lancashire; firstly, as an Outreach Conductor and then later as Lead Conductor and Service Manager. She set up her independent CE services, Connections Neuro-Disability Services, in September 2019 and has since gained the first masters in Conductive Education.

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CONDUCTING, TRAINING, LEARNING: REFLECTION THROUGH THREE LENSES OF DIGITAL LEARNING AND TEACHING

Brittany Jennings

Necessity is the mother of invention and with the world quickly shifting to online, my world moved to digital at three points; firstly, as a conductor, secondly as a trainer of the multidisciplinary conductor training program, and thirdly as a Master's student. Each of these roles and opportunities were met with their own unique set of challenges, but equally, each of these brought benefits and possibilities that may have never been explored without the forcing hand of COVID-19. It has been six months since we first began this shift. As the summer comes to an end, and I look to the fall and to the future, it important to look back and reflect on each of these more deeply, through the lenses of a conductor, trainer and learner. "Reflection involves taking the unprocessed, raw material of experience and engaging with it as a way to make sense of what has occurred" (Boud, 2001: p.10). This is an ongoing and continuous process in a conductor's career, but is arguably even more vital now as our methods have changed and shifted due to COVID. Through my own reflections on the past few months, it was possible to see common threads between learning, teaching and conducting that can be pulled together in delivering virtual classes.

If someone were to ask me five months ago about the feasibility of Conductive Education (CE) virtually, I would have answered that it just would not work. Conductive Education is hands-on, conductors need to feel, see, and experience things that just are not possible through a screen. However, as we all know well, COVID-19 has changed delivery methods for not

just Conductive Education, but for many services, schools and workplaces. Many organizations had to adapt to virtual programming and within two weeks of closing in person programming, my team had developed online Conductive Education classes. COVID-19 threw the world into a whirlwind and as we all struggled to keep up, there was little opportunity for critical reflection on best practice in the rapidly changing situation. The ability to reflect upon our practice is intrinsic to a conductor's training and this is no different in the time of a pandemic. We have a responsibility to reflect in order to improve our practice, particularly in a time of great change. Fook (2015) states that critical reflection "involves the ability to unearth, examine and change very deeply held or fundamental assumptions" (Fook, 2015: p.441). This is indeed what we must do within Conductive Education. In shifting to a virtual model, we must ask ourselves if it is possible to do so without losing the inherent principles and philosophy. Is it still possible to create potential and develop an orthofunctional personality within our participants? Brown (2018) identifies the importance of calculated risks in order to create potential. How do we do this in a virtual space where the environment is not controlled and for many, the risks may be too great? How do we provide a positive transformative learning experience that prompts our participants to examine and develop their own beliefs about their abilities and potential? This is what conductors must ask themselves in the delivery of virtual programming.

The Learner

When COVID-19 brought about the closures of most public spaces in Canada, I was in the midst of finishing my first semester of my Masters Program in Education. The university shifted to offering online classes using video-conferencing. This was my first introduction to online education in a synchronous environment. The class structure remained largely the same as in-person. The professor would posit questions to create discourse surrounding adult education and discuss the week's readings.

Having now completed my second semester, I have reflected on myself as a learner and how the pandemic impacted my learning. Among other areas, I felt a sense of reduced accountability, I attended lectures, however I would 'switch off' and not engage in the same manner as previously. I continued to enjoy my courses and engage in discussion with the students; however I adopted a detached feeling towards our readings and assignments outside of our class time. I include this here, as I have observed similar reactions from our participants throughout the pandemic. I believe the pandemic has had an adverse effect on motivation and learning for our participants. I recently attended a webinar on trauma-informed education that succinctly described the feelings of anxiety much of us are going through and how learning is impacted when individuals are in heightened stages of stress, fear, or anxiety. Indeed Rager (2009) recognises that emotions and learning are heavily linked, that emotion can enhance or hinder new knowledge acquisition and states that "...during periods of intense emotional response, neuroscience suggests that our ability to access higher order problem solving skills is diminished and less efficient (Rager, 2009: 26)." As conductors, we must consider this and accommodate for the effect that stress, anxiety and trauma can have on our participants and their loved ones. We

must also consider how our own mental health has been impacted and how that affects our ability to plan, deliver and reflect on Conductive programs. Recognizing that we can not give what we do not have, how can we adapt our classes to leverage the power of Conductive Education? Imad (2020) recommends adapting a seven-pronged approach to a trauma informed lens when teaching;

1. Creation of a safe environment
2. Building trust and transparency
3. Creation of a space that nurtures peer support and self-help
4. Promote collaboration and the sharing of power and decision-making
5. Empowerment of the learner
6. Leverage of the healing power of the diversity of the group
7. Creation of a sense of purpose

Many of these approaches are intrinsic to Conductive Education and it causes me to reflect on how we as conductors are well versed at providing a trauma-informed lens as many of our participants have already dealt with trauma in their lives and are coping with the barriers present in society in relation to their disability. With the onset of COVID-19 and the creation of a world filled with uncertainty, there is a heightened need for these approaches. We must use the methodological tools of Conductive Education such as the group, the learning environment and ourselves as conductors to build a safe space in a time of uncertainty. Recognizing that as individuals, we do not have all the answers, but that as a group we can still come together to find some clarity and meaning and encourage participants to help build a space that allows discovery of potential in a new way. This shift to a more group-led and trauma-informed approach to teaching applies to not only our participants, but equally to student conductors. In a digital environment,

it can be challenging to create a space that is nurturing and allows learners to feel empowered. We must begin from a place of transparency and honesty, and continue to strive towards a developing sense of purpose in our methods. This can be the foundation on which we build a transformative, learning environment.

The Trainer

As a trainer who facilitates the Multidisciplinary Conductor training program, I am tasked with the challenge of supporting students at various sites. While this training was initially designed to take place in person, this has now had to shift to an online format. As the students are based at different sites, it may be possible for technology to enrich the existing training that is taking place by bringing staff and students together more easily and more often. Virtual programming additionally adds a new element to peer observation and feedback as students in different provinces can see each other lead as well as observe different conductors' leading styles. Creating opportunities for interaction and dialogue are essential to any learning environment and providing opportunities for students to interact and create discourse with one another is a valuable and perhaps essential component of an educative environment. Bouchard (2013) asserts the importance of limiting the transactional distance in an online learning environment. This is realized through both synchronous and asynchronous discussions to encourage students to make use of peer observation, give feedback on leading, as well as engage in theoretical discussions and collaborative reflective practice.

Reflecting on in-person and online learning delivery models, the digital environment lends itself to a more nuanced teaching style. Rather than the traditional educational roles of teacher-student, the removal of face-to-face instruction may also help to remove the barriers

of hierarchy and instead provide opportunities for the students to create dialogue and reflect on their own experiences and knowledge. Digital interfaces dispose of the concept of the traditional classroom and rather everyone has a seat at the table with equal opportunity to speak and if orchestrated correctly, the students and teacher alike can be involved in the generation of ideas, knowledge and meaning making.

In addition to the benefits of cross-site interaction and communication, the pandemic has provided opportunities for staff to work as a larger team across all sites and work in partnership to offer classes. With the onset of virtual classes, staff were able to support each other from different sites, collaborate and observe one another. The shift to virtual classes has also required conductors to engage in critical reflective practice, as we have had to adapt our methods to a virtual world. As professionals, we must ask ourselves what is the goal of Conductive Education and how can this be translated to a virtual world? As professionals, we must engage in discourse, reflect on our previously held views and consider how they fit within the new method of delivery. This process can be transformative, a concept we conductors know well. How can we acquire new ways of understanding what we are able to do without in person programming?

If we view this moment in time as an opportunity for professional development, it may be possible to develop strategies that can transform the way we practice Conductive Education both in-person and through virtual means. Cranton & King (2003) outline five strategies that can be applied to in person or distance settings to promote professional development; action plans, reflective activities, case studies, curriculum development and critical theory discussions. These strategies should be examined and incorporated for both conductors and student conductors. We are all learning through this time on how Conductive Education must shift and change to fit the needs of this unique and challenging situation. Through using these

strategies, it may be possible to examine CE and determine how to maintain the principles and philosophy while still adapting to the changing needs of our participants. Particularly in a time of stress and uncertainty, the use of case studies, action plans and reflection are vital to ensuring a high quality of delivery. Discourse amongst us is essential in order to adapt to this new norm.

The Conductor

As we shifted our Conductive Education classes to a virtual world, the challenges seemed insurmountable. The virtual service delivery caused us to change and adapt many of our tools of Conductive Education. The group, the learning environment, rhythmical intention, our ability to observe and of course our facilitations were all drastically affected. How can we use rhythmical intention when more than one person speaking at a time causes audio disruptions? How can we use the power of the group when we are all in our own living rooms or kitchens and can not interact or see each other in the same way? Perhaps the most difficult of challenges was how to observe and adjust our facilitations when we can not see the whole person and can not 'feel' the initiations and the movements? It was quickly clear that virtual Conductive Education would not be the same as in-person. This is impossible, however, by reflecting on the core principles and philosophy of Conductive Education, there is the possibility of creating a service that is complementary, educative and possibly transformative for our participants. While different, there may still be a place for virtual Conductive Education that can be powerful in teaching individuals about themselves as autonomous human beings.

The ultimate goal of Conductive Education is development of an orthofunctional personality. We wish to create and develop potential and guide participants to this realization of their own potential. Hari states that the main objective of

orthofunction is to "achieve cognitive growth, not merely performance" Hari, (1997, p.2) If we view the primary goal of Conductive Education as achievement of this cognitive growth, perhaps an argument can be made that this does not have to occur in person. If we wish to teach problem solving and the ability to recognize potential in oneself, is this not the perfect opportunity to explore ways in which to teach these skills, when the conductor is not there to provide facilitations in the same way? The participant must think for themselves and use what they have available to them to find a route to the solution of the task. The challenge becomes how calculated risks can occur to allow the participant to explore new possibilities and new ways of thinking and doing.

In beginning to deliver virtual programs, my first observation of our participants was of their resiliency. Many were so pleased to stay in contact with us and were determined to figure out new technologies quickly in order to participate. They found ways of adapting and differentiating tasks when they did not have the usual equipment or have a facilitator to support them. The power of the group appeared naturally in some classes as individuals valued staying connected during a time of isolation. Participants motivated one another and discussed ways of adapting to this new world. The ability to quickly shift to virtual programs, provided individuals with a support system and peers who knew them, and were experiencing the same challenges and changes to their lifestyles. As mentioned, there were also some limitations to our virtual classes, which quickly became evident. Most classes were done solely in a sitting position, which changed the possibilities for learning. Many classes were unable to get the benefits of a lying program to develop their proprioceptive skills and work freely towards initiation, control and range of movement. Additionally, many classes did not involve a standing and walking program, or it was heavily adapted and differentiated to ensure safety. It is important to consider the effects of these limitations, as for some of our

participants, our program is the only opportunity they have to get out of their chair, weight bear, and develop their skills in a standing position.

COVID-19 required conductors to use their ability to observe, differentiate and adapt to the changing situation. Boud (2001) outlines three occasions and opportunities for reflection; reflection in anticipation of events, reflection in the midst of action, and reflection after events have taken place. This aligns well with the reflective practice of conductors. In advance of the class, the conductors plan or anticipate the learning environment, we adapt during the class based on our conductive observations, and we reflect at the end of the class to help us prepare to teach the next session. In a virtual world, the actions may have changed, however this reflective practice remains the same. The shifting to a virtual world challenges us in new ways, and as a result our reflective practice becomes that much more important. Rather than the creation of one learning environment, we must accommodate for many different learning environments all coming together in one virtual class. In anticipation of a virtual class, reflection needs to take place on how the daily routine and task series may need to be adapted due to safety, ability, equipment and facilitators (or lack thereof). If there is no lying or standing program for example, what are the group aims and how does our focus for learning change? We are not always able to anticipate the needs of our participants in an environment not of our making, and therefore our reflections in action increase in importance. When reflecting in action, we must change the way in which we observe, particularly as we often can not see the person's whole body. How does this affect our prevention, correction and feedback and make our verbal cues and prompts vital? Our use of physiological facilitation shifted into educational facilitation as we taught parents, spouses, caregivers or participants themselves how to facilitate, what the purpose of each task was and how to be our eyes and hands to observe and feel the movements. This challenge

brought forth other learning opportunities, as individuals had to adapt for their own situation.

Reflection after the class has taken place requires us to examine how our classes have changed, how they must adapt to a new environment, but still allow for learning to take place. This was perhaps the most challenging piece for myself. It is natural to compare and contrast in-person to virtual programming and very easy to focus on the limitations of delivering Conductive Education through a screen. However, if we reflect critically on the underpinning methodology and philosophy of Conductive Education, I believe it is possible to offer a virtual program that is meaningful and allows learning to take place. We can recognize the limitations of virtual, while still exploring the possibilities that may be unique to virtual programming.

While there are limitations to a virtual program, such as not being able to safely offer the full daily routine (lying, standing and walking), there is the possibility to educate others on the benefits of a Conductive lifestyle and for them to adapt these taught skills directly into their home environment. Our adult participants can think creatively to problem solve through a task when no one is able to facilitate them. Parents have an opportunity to learn what their child is capable of and to know how to challenge them. Spouses can gain a deeper understanding of how a diagnosis has affected their loved-one, by listening to the group talk about challenges and share solutions. While we are eager to return to in-person, there may be a place for a blended service delivery where the power is in the hands of the participants when they attend virtual programs. They can be encouraged to have greater awareness over their bodies and their safety. In doing so they can gain greater autonomy, as they problem solve and work out their own solutions.

Adapting for Future Potential of Online Conductive Education

As conductors, we are nothing if not adaptable and flexible. We use our observations to see what is needed in the moment and use our knowledge and skill to adapt to the situation on the spot. We reflect on experiences both in practice and out of it. In these uncertain times, we have been put to task and are must continue to think critically and reflectively about Conductive Education and the possibilities of virtual programming. We must put our creative minds to work. In traditional Conductive Education, all three types of facilitation (educational, physiological and psychological) happen simultaneously and are led by our observations. While we now cannot use our hands to touch and facilitate participants through virtual classes, we can use our words to develop the minds of parents and adult participants. Perhaps this is the greatest opportunity we have before us in delivering virtual Conductive Education: to teach Conductive Education from an educational standpoint. If orthofunction is our ultimate goal, is this not the perfect time to call our participants to action? When we are limited in our ability to provide the solutions and the answers, we can work instead to develop their ability to think creatively, set goals, and develop potential. What do we want to achieve and unlock in each participant? How can we do this with the tools at our disposal? By shifting our focus slightly to the cognitive and social aspects of Conductive Education, we can have deeper conversations about transferring skills outside of class and leading a conductive lifestyle. We can prioritize the psychological and the educational in order to achieve the physical. We can change the mind to change the body and instill in our participants that notion of 'conductive upbringing'. Conductive Education does not end once you leave the classroom, participants are taught a new way of thinking, doing and being. We must continue to find ways

to transfer this knowledge to participants in a virtual world. Seeing participants in their home environment, glimpsing into their daily lives can be an opportunity to educate and foster participant's ability to set goals, see potential for individual growth and problem-solve creatively leading them to this conductive lifestyle. Virtual Conductive Education can complement what we already provide in-person, and perhaps exist past this pandemic. What began as a safe alternative can exist as a service that breaks down barriers in accessibility and geography. This may be a long-term solution for those who can only attend in-person Conductive Education infrequently due to financial reasons or because they have to travel across the country to the nearest site. If this is the case, it does require us to continue to look at the potential that exists in virtual Conductive Education.

Of course, this is not done easily and the virtual conductive group requires far more considerations and preparations than the in-person group. As professionals, we must go into it with our eyes open, ready to observe for all of the challenges and be ready to reflect and adapt to all of the variables that arise in a digital world. We must recognize and accept that it will not be the same as in-person and nor should it be. Rather, we should examine how we can use a digital world to develop awareness of potential, ability to problem solve and as an opportunity to teach a conductive upbringing or lifestyle. "When educators examine their practice critically and thereby acquire ways of understanding what they do, transformative learning about teaching takes place" (Cranton and King, 2003: p.32). If we start to view virtual classes as a complement to in-person, it may be possible to maintain the fundamental principles of Conductive Education and provide a transformative learning experience.

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★ RESEARCH ★

An Exploration into Makaton and its use in Conductive Education

Briana Campbell

Abstract

Edited version of submitted dissertation

The purpose of my dissertation was to explore the use of Makaton in Conductive Education (CE). Data was collected from 27 qualified conductors working in 8 CE Centres or specialist schools across the UK. Using questionnaires, data was collected to expand understanding of conductors' perceptions in relation to the use of Makaton, and to determine if, as a means of communication, Makaton is considered to be a valuable tool to assist children to learn within a CE session. In general, those conductors who participated considered Makaton positively as a communication aid to be utilised within the CE session.

Setting the context, and identifying the 'problem'

A large portion of my placement time over the past 3 years has been spent in one CE Centre in which the conductors use Makaton. I saw how the use of Makaton created a deeper understanding for children who were either nonverbal or spoke minimally. I also witnessed first-hand a child who used Makaton with her parents and siblings at home, who then settled into sessions very quickly. I then was fortunate to be able to go to another CE centre for placement, and was faced

with a contrasting experience. In this CE Centre, Makaton was not used as much as I had seen previously, and so these contrasting experiences opened up a range of questions for me.

As I began to research Makaton and its use in CE, I recognised a gap in the literature published. There is very little written about Makaton, sign language or alternative methods of communication for children with additional needs. These factors have motivated me to explore Makaton and its use in CE. I hope that this study will guide me in my future practice and positively impact my continued teacher training, and subsequently in a role as a conductor-teacher.

The Research Questions

In light of the above, the following 3 questions set the focus for the dissertation:

RQ1.

In what way is Makaton considered a valuable tool as a means of communication in Conductive Education?

RQ2.

What are the considerations for conductors incorporating Makaton into CE sessions?

RQ3.

How do conductors decide when Makaton should be used?

Literature Review:

Makaton:

It is understood that individuals with Down's Syndrome appear to have more speech and language impairments than their neurotypical peers, and so Makaton was created in the 1970s for children diagnosed with Down's Syndrome to create a deeper understanding of the world, and to give them an additional method of communication. Makaton is a simple form of sign language, designed to support the use of spoken language and to help both children and adults to communicate (Singing Hands, 2020). Makaton is now used across more than 40 countries (Makaton Development Project, 2006).

Makaton and CE:

Throughout my degree I have gained experience in several placements in which I have been able to work with children of all ages. I have seen a variety of groups and age ranges using the conductive philosophy and methodology to successfully reach aims set by their conductors. Dr Maria Hári, described CE as an integrated complex education, a methodologically planned and guided learning system, affecting and encompassing every single function of the child at any given age (Hári, 1990). The main area of the philosophy of CE that I consider important, is the use of the Human Principle; the relationship between the person, the environment and the conductor (Hári and Akos, 1989). These factors are not only vital elements in CE practice, but they are also an essential link to the use of Makaton in CE. From my experiences, I consider Makaton to be a significant 'scaffold' for learning which has the potential to help children express their personality, and to explore their environment as they communicate with those around them. I wanted to determine if conductors perceived Makaton in this way, and if they considered training in Makaton important. As a student conductor I am interested in this as

I personally would have valued the opportunity to learn more about communication methods such as Makaton. As the conductor training has evolved over the years much has remained in order to enable learning of the CE philosophies and methodologies. The principles of training "always relate to practical experience. The whole training course has a practical bias, the curriculum for training providing a link between theoretical and practical" (Brown and Mikula-Toth, 1997, p. 5). Through my observations in practice, I believe Makaton is vital for certain children to help with their understanding of the daily routine. I will be interested to see if this is reflected in the responses from conductors.

With the rise in use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), the Professional Conductor Association (PCA) created a guide to using them and how they can be incorporated into the daily routine in CE (PCA, 2009). Porter (2008) believes that children should have access to their individual form of AAC throughout the programme. This perception endorsed by the PCA, perhaps displays a perceived shift in the conductive world towards the use of AAC within sessions.

The human principle creates the understanding of the need to bring all aspects of a person's development together to achieve active learning. Hári, who despite publishing her content many years ago, is still very relevant to CE today; has an interesting outlook on this. Hári believed it was vital for those who are receiving CE to understand exactly what they are doing. That each individual must maintain a level of ability and not be passive in session (Hári, 1988). I am interested to find out whether conductors see Makaton as a useful tool which enables understanding and learning, aiding development of the human principle.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Introduction:

Researching the literature surrounding Makaton and CE provided some perspective on how I wanted to conduct my own research and the questions I wanted to answer. Deciding which methods of research would be best suited to gaining the data needed to answer my questions, I considered a quantitative approach to be the best fit. My intentions were to use questionnaires to gain an understanding of how conductors perceive and utilise Makaton within their service provision.

Ethics:

I was under the impression that I would not be faced with many ethical issues as I intended on sending the questionnaires to adults and would not be using children in my research at all. However, I soon realised I could come across certain issues. I have worked closely with a few of the staff in the CE centres I was hoping to approach to participate in the research, and as a student conductor, realised that I could be considered an 'insider researcher'. In particular this forced me to consider conversations that I had had with conductors previously. The use of Makaton has become a topic of personal interest (Sikes, 2008), and so I was keen to ensure that bias, on both my own part, and that of any conductors who took part was minimised. I wanted to be perceived as a trustworthy researcher. As Patton stated: "The trustworthiness of the data is tied directly to the trustworthiness of the researcher who collects and analyses the data" (Patton, 1999, p.17).

Research methods:

Whilst researching aspects of research methods, I read one dissertation in which the student had gathered information in a qualitative format and displayed their findings quantitatively. The colourful visual charts

made me, as a visual learner, want to read on and look further into the study. Taking inspiration from this dissertation influenced my decision to collect data and analyse it in a manner that was both visual and graphic. This decision influenced the data collection itself.

There were certain negatives to interviewing that led me to feel it simply was not the right fit for my study or for me as a researcher. Whilst interviewing I felt I would be unable to maintain the anonymity of the individual conductors as I could with questionnaires. This could have increased bias during the interview, if I were to 'lead' the conversation in a particular direction. I also thought that if I undertook two interviews with conductors, one being from a centre in which Makaton is frequently used and the other where it is not, my data would be too narrow, and so less reliable and valid. Using questionnaires meant that I could access a larger number of conductors, with a wider range of experience, and so analysis would create opportunity to gain a wider perspective on the reality for conductors.

Reading around the construction, and use of questionnaires I came to the conclusion I could gather the information required using a Likert scale format (Nemoto and Beglar, 2014). The Likert method was created by Dr. Rensis Likert; "his goal was to develop a means of measuring psychological attitudes in a "scientific" way" (Bertram, 2007, p. 1). My method of using questionnaires meant that I could gain the information necessary to answer my research questions, whilst also removing myself from each situation. I felt that studies involving observation could lead to bias as I may end up favouring groups which I had previously attended. I also felt that the collection of potential data found through observation could simply be found through asking the questions via questionnaire. As much as I enjoy observing sessions I felt this method of gathering data would not be of great use in answering my research questions.

Through the use of questionnaires I felt I would be able to maintain anonymity of all conductors

which, when analysing the data, reduces risk of bias. Believing that questionnaires could be a more objective means of data collection, in comparison to interview or observation, I proceeded to apply for ethics approval in the light of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), and BERA (2018) guidelines.

Following this initial exploration I decided to pilot my questionnaires using the Likert scale amongst my peers and a selection of friends who do not study CE. Based on their feedback I decided the method worked perfectly for the majority of the questions. For the few questions which did not require 5 options I chose to introduce a simple binary, yes or no answering option. Following the pilot, I revised the length and layout of the questionnaire, ensuring that it was relevant for those who use Makaton and those who do not. Length of questionnaire was considered to be a relevant consideration. Recent graduates expressed that it can be difficult to gain responses, and so when delivering the first few questionnaires, one of the conductors asked if they could "...fill it in online - I hate writing long responses on these sheets?" When I explained that the answers were simply given through the Likert scale and yes/no answers, she cheered with joy!

Triangulation:

Triangulation can be described as the ability to accurately and precisely compare the data with "findings on the same topic produced, using different research methods, by other researchers or based on alternative theories/approaches" (Denscombe, 2002, p. 105.). Similarly, Carter et al., (2014) identify four kinds of triangulation including source triangulation. A concern of mine following my decision to rely solely on questionnaires was that I would struggle to triangulate my findings. Traditionally I have observed triangulation in the form of two types of data collection being used to prove the validity of the same outcome. As I decided against using another method of data collection, I set out to triangulate my research by approaching conductors in eight CE centres. In this way I used theory and data source triangulation.

Data analysis:

My three research questions formed the structure for my data analysis.

RQ1.

In what way is Makaton considered a valuable tool as a means of communication in Conductive Education?

Makaton is considered a valuable tool for creating inclusion through communication (Sheehy and Duffy, 2009). It is also a tool which develops understanding for children and encourages their speech development (Bednarski, 2016; Sheehy and Duffy, 2009). These perceptions are reflected in my data. Makaton is perceived by the conductors as being a valuable tool for communication. Eighty five percent of conductors said they use Makaton in session, and believing that Makaton and other communication methods are necessary to achieve success within a CE session, three quarters of the conductors who responded, also said they discuss the use of Makaton with parents. Given these findings, it is perhaps unsurprising that the majority of conductors agreed that Makaton training should be incorporated into the conductor training course.

RQ2.

What are the considerations for conductors incorporating Makaton into CE sessions?

CE places a huge focus on the potential within each child (Hári and Ákos, 1989). The majority of conductors considered Makaton useful, however although 3 conductors were uncertain as to its usefulness, all of them continued to use Makaton in their services. This leads me to believe despite being sure that Makaton is helping the children to unlock their potential, they are using it in the hope that it brings something to the session. Something I had considered which may be preventing those who are considering using Makaton, is the amount of time spent learning the signs to be able to accurately incorporate them into each session. Throughout my placement, in one CE

centre, every day someone would be double checking with their colleagues that they were performing a sign correctly or being asked by a parent if they knew a specific sign. I found no negatives to this. Perhaps it took up some time which could have been spent writing aims or other areas of the programme plans but otherwise - the negative impact was minimal.

In their study of the impact of CE, Bairstow et al, (1991), considered children who were not accepted for CE to have poor contact with conductors and parents. The incorporation of Makaton could be what a child with additional hearing or understanding impairments needs to build a relationship with their parents and the conductors. When considering the influence that giving that parent the sign they needed to use at home, building a bond with their child who has additional needs, makes any extra effort worth it. If music therapy can be used to “strengthen parent-child relationships through increasing developmentally conducive interactions, by assisting parents to bond with their children, and by extending the repertory of parenting skills in relating to their child through interactive play” (Abad & Williams, 2007, p. 52), I believe the case can surely be made that Makaton can also be this bridge in the bond between parent and child with CE being an ideal environment to incorporate this. In my questionnaire, 75% of conductors said they agree that Makaton is easily incorporated whilst 10% were unsure. The final 5% disagreed, believing that Makaton is not easily incorporated into CE sessions. The same conductor however also agreed that Makaton should be incorporated into student conductive training to broaden understanding. If this individual had been trained in basic Makaton and the benefits of it, would they find it easier to incorporate into their leading?

RQ3.

How do conductors decide when Makaton should be used?

In response to this research question I wanted to gain a wider understanding of how those who

do use Makaton have come to the decision to do so and why those who do not currently use it, feel that Makaton is not suitable for them to incorporate. Of 27 responses only 4 conductors did not use Makaton in their sessions. From the findings however it was unclear why this was the case, especially as there was expressed positive regard for its impact on the children. It did not appear that Makaton involves a great deal of planning. This was reinforced by Bednarski, (2016) who showed that even a limited amount of training and preparation, still had a positive impact on the children. I knew from the literature that Makaton has existed since the 1970s, so I was interested to determine if conductors who do not currently use Makaton have used it in another setting. Half of these conductors had used Makaton previously, however as it was impossible to determine why they did not continue to use it, these findings raise more questions than they answer.

Feelings towards Makaton are certainly changing however. Sheehy and Duffy (2009) determined that sign language is being used more by the general public, and within the wider public domain, e.g. ‘signing’ on specific TV programmes, and in certain political contexts. It would have been interesting to find how the conductors’ personal opinions towards Makaton have changed generationally, however this would form part of further study, as would consideration of conductor’s perceptions towards AAC in general as a means to develop relationships, and so enable learning.

Discussion: Influence on Practice

I believe exploring Makaton and its use in CE has helped me to incorporate more signs into my session and has helped me to gain confidence in developing a relationship with children, especially those with known hearing and communication difficulties. This has helped

me create a more inclusive environment for learning, and through the use of Makaton I feel I have developed a greater understanding of the Human Principle, and of how to create a positive learning environment. Over the academic year, reflecting upon one child in particular, it has been interesting to see how much signing this

child and her family now use. It is evident that the relationship between the conductor and child develops when Makaton is used, whilst feedback from parents reflects respect for the conductor's knowledge of Makaton as an additional skill that parents can also learn.

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★ MASTERS LEVEL STUDY ★

Being a Transformative Pedagogue Within a Conductive Education Setting – What Does it Mean For Me?

Lucy Barraclough

A year ago, I was given the opportunity to enrol on to the Masters (MA) in Conductive Education (CE) course. At the time, I had been a qualified Conductor for seven years and was unsure if I wanted to go back and do 'formal' learning. However, a year in to the course I am very happy I decided to say yes to this opportunity. The most challenging but rewarding aspect of the MA is delving deeper in to your own beliefs, and challenging these to better yourself, not only for your own professional development but also for the children (or adults) you work with.

One of the modules I have undertaken so far is about Transformative Pedagogy and within this

article I will explore what it means to me to be a transformative pedagogue. Transformation by definition means "causing a major change to something or someone, especially in a way that makes it or them better" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). I will reflect upon both how I have transformed as a teacher throughout my career and how I use my skills to transform the lives of the children and parents I work with.

Frames of reference and Teaching and Learning styles

Jack Mezirow, a social constructivist, developed the 'Transformational Learning Theory' based on adult learning. According to Illeris (2018), Mezirow theorised that everyone has belief systems, or 'frames of reference; the core belief system a person has, forms the way in which they respond to situations and the reason behind why they do things in certain ways. Mezirow believed that for transformative teaching to take place a person must understand their own frame of reference and be open to being 'transformed', thus changing their fundamental ways of thinking. When starting the 'Transformative Pedagogy' module I was challenged to think about my own frames of reference in terms of myself as a pedagogue, my views of people with disabilities and my own learning environment which has been formed throughout my life and my teaching career to date. As the module progressed and I reflected on my teaching methods, styles and general views which influence my teaching, I have been able to understand more about my frames of reference, add to them, and make changes to them as I have 'transformed'.

An example of how I have begun to change my frames of reference is in relation to my learning style and the influence this has on me as a teacher. Sreenidhi and Tay (2017) state that Fleming's VAK model is commonly used when talking about individual learning styles. Fleming believed that everyone can be categorised into one of three groups: Visual learners (V), Auditory learners (A) or Kinesthetic learners (K). Although people may cross over, they tend to develop a predisposition to learn mainly in one of these ways. When taking a test to see what kind of learner I am, it came out as a visual learner. Visual learners may not internalise information if it is only heard auditorily without any visual resource to reinforce it. They tend to enjoy

learning in groups and picking up on visual cues from people around them. When reflecting upon this information and the outcome of the test, I could see that I heavily rely on visual resources when teaching e.g. showing pictures, using the interactive white board to show videos and using visual worksheets. I also have a child in my class who is registered blind, and this has helped me to understand why I find it difficult to plan for this child's needs, something which I had previously just put down to a lack of experience.

In order to change my frames of reference and in turn transform my teaching style, I started to think about the children individually and look at how each one responds to different learning activities. This helped me to see that within the class there are a range of learning styles which I am not always catering for with my visual style of teaching and this is therefore impacting upon the children's learning. To change this, I planned a session to incorporate as many learning styles and experiences as I could, based on the book called *The Naughty Bus*. The children experienced activities such as: sitting at the bus stop and watching the bus fly past them (v), holding on to and moving a ring to pretend to drive the bus whilst singing the wheels on the bus song (a)(k), moving different vehicles through baked beans (v)(k) as well as exploring 'brushing' the vehicles teeth with toothpaste (a)(k) and giving them a bath in warm soapy water (k). The children really responded well to this experience as straight away I could observe that they had gained a deeper understanding of the story and the various parts of it, as well as exploring the feelings of the 'Bus' character. After reflecting on this lesson, I could see the importance of the teaching styles I use upon the learning of the class and the individuals within it. If I continue to just teach in my 'visual' way, it will have a negative impact on the learning of the individuals within the group. If I can continue to use a wider range of teaching styles, I can see the positive impact that this can have on the children's learning.

Disorientating dilemmas and working with parents

After reflecting upon this situation, I started to think about how I could apply the principle of adapting my teaching to address a wider range of learning styles applicable to the children in the Milestone Club (MC). In the Milestone Club, the aim is to engage young children in physical activities, and to motivate them with hands-on facilitation in order to support learning in the context of the milestones in child development. Children in the MC attend alongside their parents, with the ultimate goal of being to equip the parents with the resources to help their children at home and to implement these into the children's daily routine. The aim is also to increase the children's independence and work towards their ever changing and developing potential (NICE, 2018). When reflecting on some of the sessions I have led in the MC, I could see that although I implemented more activities based around different learning styles than I did when teaching in the School group, I still heavily relied on the use of visual toys and activities. After the success of the sessions in the School group, I thought that I would try and expand the range of activities I set up in the Milestone Club to cater for a wider range of learning styles and sensory needs. When doing this I could see how much the children enjoyed the different activities such as: standing and playing at the water tray (a)(k)(v), exploring foam at the mirror (k), sitting on the rocking horses practicing their sitting balance (k) and playing music whilst they are moving around (a)(k). By implementing new activities, rather than always going back to the same ones and including tasks to cater for more learning styles I could see the children engage more easily and more often than before. This has challenged me to develop this way of leading sessions further, and to be more creative, implementing fewer visual-based activities. By doing this I can increase my ability to be a transformative teacher and develop the learning opportunities for the children

Working closely with parents is a real challenge for me as a professional and it has challenged my own 'frames of reference' from the beginning of my career to where I am now. In Mezirow's Transformational Learning Theory, he believed that for transformation to take place, something must challenge and test a person's 'frame of reference'. He called this challenge 'disorientating dilemmas' (Christie et al, 2015). When I was reflecting on this, I could identify a major disorientating dilemma that has influenced me and transformed my thinking as a teacher.

During the MC sessions, particularly when a parent and child first start attending, the child may cry a lot throughout the physical activities. These are normally new to the child and as is in CE's nature, they are challenging for them. Sometimes parents find it difficult to watch their child being upset and therefore ask to stop the activity and want to comfort their child. However, as a Conductor, my instinct is to 'push' the child slightly more and let them cry for a short time during the activity as I can see the potential is in them to achieve it. This is where one of my disorientating dilemmas displayed itself. Earlier on in my career, I would say that one of my 'frames of reference' would have been that I should always 'push' the children to reach their potential, however, after having a child of my own this challenged this belief somewhat. I can now empathise with the parents when they want to withdraw their child from an activity because they are upset, or they want to pick them up and cuddle them because they cannot bear to see them crying. As a mother, I know how hard it is to see your child crying and I can only imagine how much harder it is for parents of children with disabilities who have already gone through so much upset throughout their short lives. My 'frame of reference' in this case has changed and although my belief that the

children should be pushed as I can see their potential is still there, I believe that it is more important to build up a good relationship both with the parents and the child so that we can all work towards that potential together. If I can involve the children in some fun activities that they enjoy and the parents can see their child is happy to take part, it is more likely that the parents will begin to feel comfortable to push their child slightly more each time and have a greater understanding of their child's potential.

This is more important to me than just pushing the children and losing that relationship with the family that hopefully will be long lasting and will lead to a greater long-term effect on the child.

I am sure that as I progress through my career there will be plenty more disorientating dilemmas to contend with. However, instead of seeing them as 'threatening', I will now see them as a chance to learn and transform.

Conclusion

In conclusion, being a transformative pedagogue to me is about being open to be changed, to develop and build on the teacher that I already am. It is about challenging my 'frames of references' but also reaffirming some of them as they are what makes me who I am, both as a person and as a professional within my setting.

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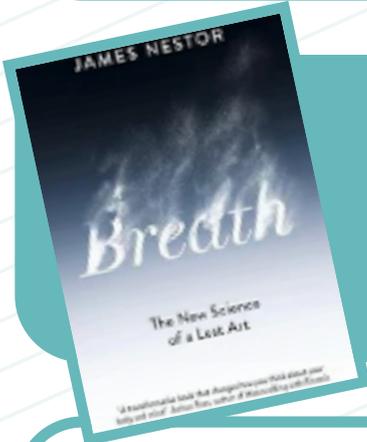
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★ BREATH ★

The New Science of a Lost Art

James Nestor. Penguin Life (2020)

Breathing is something we all do. We probably take it for granted, with most of us rarely thinking about what we are doing or how we are doing it. Neither are we likely to think about the impact breathing has on our movements and thinking, or indeed the impact of our thinking and behaviour, upon our breathing pattern. This book enables the reader to consider breath as an essential part of health, as a 'whole-istic' integrative practise. In his story telling, James Nestor is able to highlight the opportunities that lie within our breathing patterns to positively impact thinking, behaviour and subsequent interaction with the environment. Well researched, James Nestor takes the reader on a journey of discovery and reflection. There are no answers, or solutions, rather reflections upon an analysis of experimentation with different breathing patterns and styles, demonstrated in different populations and cultures, both historical and current.

The book is logically formatted, and the style of writing enables an easy connection with the text. Nestor positions himself firmly in the research context, playing the role of 'Guinea Pig' throughout the 'journey'. By gaining greater insight into the styles of breathing exhibited and preserved in different populations, and philosophical contexts, Nestor is able to gain

greater understanding of his own breathing difficulties. There is strong reference to ancient breathing styles demonstrated in Yoga, and Buddhist influenced practices, and to more modern practices such as Schroth Method. The Schroth Method is named after the 16 year old girl who by creating a specific method of breathing and movement overcome her 'incurable' scoliosis. This may sound unlikely, however is a practice that conductors are aware of, and heard about at a recent CEPEG conference.

Taking the reader on a journey which begins with a reflection on first 'mouth', and then 'nose' breathing, Nestor weaves a tale of discovery, articulating comparison and difference along the way, as each chapter builds on the previous one. Within these 10 chapters, Nestor creates opportunity to explore not only the structural physiology of the human body, but also the potential within it for change. Positioning himself in the centre of the narrative, Nestor creates for the reader an understanding of himself as a person, as well as those he meets. By weaving both the personal and the professional, the motoric and the sensory into his text, his writing serves to expand thinking of 'whole-ism' in a way that may be of interest to conductors. We gain an insight

not only into the physical issues that may be created or resolved by different breathing methods, but also into the personalities of those scientists and 'explorers' who have gone out on a limb to follow their passion.

This book is well referenced, however does not read as an academic text. Nestor has been able to create a narrative around the science that makes the science both comprehensible and relatable. This is not a self-help book, and Nestor is careful to warn against self-diagnosing or prescribing. It does however have the potential to help us reconsider our beliefs with respect to the potential each of us holds, and to challenge what we often consider to be inevitable. It also comes at a time in which we are forced to consider the impact of a virus upon our ability to breathe, to behave and move spontaneously and easily. 'Breath' has the potential to change how we perceive our own response to the environment, how we teach and facilitate breathing within our sessions, and to our observation of breathing as a 'whole-istic' automatic skill, one perhaps that we have deprioritised as we concentrate on more visible participation and functional achievement.

This book may help us observe differently as we work within our groups to enable greater motor control, it might also help us consider more fully breathing as an essential part of the sequence, as well as a skill in its own right.

In the current context, this book is both timely and relevant, and within a professional context serves to support the conductive perspective that change is possible, that all people can learn, and that learning is limitless. It is perhaps for these reasons that this book is worth reading. As conductors we are taught to believe that change is possible, but really how much do we apply this to ourselves, and to our practice.... how much do we really perceive potential to be limitless, and how much do we really apply this thinking to our observation and creation of 'whole-ism'? This book serves to challenge some of our preconceptions, and long-held beliefs, whilst also supporting our belief in neuroplasticity and the brain's capacity for change.

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