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★ COLLEGE ★

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★ EDITORIAL ★

Of all the learning that occurs as a consequence of undertaking formal, doctoral research, the opportunity to articulate, rationalize and 'defend' the decisions made, as a defining stage of the assessment process, has potential to be the most transformative. I was lucky enough to have such an experience. The events of that day will remain with me, however, whilst this experience was indeed transformative, it serves to highlight the need for conductors to be able to 'defend' and articulate their knowledge in a range of different mediums. In this the second edition of the Conductive College Journal, the format for 'defence' is the written word.

If research aims to support the development of new knowledge, then conductors' reflections on their practice, research and learning likewise serve to expand comprehension. The foreword provided by Dr Tunde Rozsahegyi serves to explore some of the necessary issues when undertaking primary research within a CE setting; 'positionality' within the study, and the implications of your findings, upon practice. Contributions from conductors highlight learning gained within training and higher education contexts, as well as experiential learning from practice; the use of plinths in children's sessions,



reflection upon the first year of qualification, the challenges of providing training to those wishing to work as Multi-Disciplinary (MD) Conductors, the adaptations required to teach phonics to adolescents, and reflection on the power of the group. A short overview of my own research into conductor's perceptions of expertise is included towards the end. The concluding section of this edition outlines the aims and opportunities provided by the Conductive College.

The aim of the journal; as a means of communicating what we as conductors do, in a range of contexts, creates the opportunity to develop CPD, whilst written accounts of practice, reflection and research, serve to act as a historical record, a 'snap-shot' of thinking and practice in 2019. This is a fantastic effort by all contributors, and thanks go to you all.

Dr. Theresa Kinnersley

Programme Director BA in CE, Conductive College

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★ FOREWORD ★

Researching Conductive Education: Some issues and how they can be addressed

Dr. Tunde Rozsahegyi

As a student of conductive education, you can rightly expect – just like any others engaged in professional development – that during your course you will not simply enhance your ability to deliver services but also cultivate an enquiring and critical attitude towards your work. One important way of nurturing this professional curiosity is to undertake empirical research and to write it up as a project or dissertation.

This short paper highlights the benefits of this kind of research and considers some issues which need to be addressed when planning, conducting and evaluating an investigation in the field of conductive education.

Rationale

The research process is never an easy task at any level of study. Decisions need to be made about what exactly to investigate, how to go about the investigation, and how to make sense of the data that has been collected so that meaningful findings emerge. The study then needs to be presented in a clear, coherent and persuasive fashion, so that readers can understand and appreciate the research process and its outcomes as a whole.

The course you are following will provide a valuable basis for undertaking such research. It could be, for instance, that during your studies you develop a particular interest in one or other aspect of conductive education which you will

then wish to investigate further. For instance, you might start to wonder where and how conductive education is or could be provided, or to reflect on the extent to which its pedagogical or other elements relate to generic approaches to disability or are distinct characteristics only of itself. You might as well develop an interest in the outlooks and aspirations of service users, traditionally less examined in research.

The benefits for you of doing an investigation may not appear immediately or easily, but they can eventually be quite profound. The process is very likely to deepen your understanding of conductive education and, if done well, will eventually enhance the understandings of others too. You will, depending on the topic, gain deeper appreciation of broader professional issues too – educational inclusion, inter-agency professional practice or interactions with adult learners, perhaps – as well as how these issues impact on the practice of conductive education itself.

Furthermore, by undertaking research activities, you will expand your own experience and possibly strengthen aspirations to be an enquiring and analytical professional. You will then be more prepared to look critically and purposefully at ideas and practice, perhaps even to challenge or change them, once you take increasing responsibility in delivery and development of conductive services.

Objectives and questions

Once an interest becomes an actual topic, objectives or research questions are usually articulated which set a direction for your empirical investigation (these can be refined further as your research progresses). There are many step-by-step guidance books about how to do this (for example, Roberts-Holmes, 2005; Lambert, 2012; Denscombe, 2017), as well as published research reports which will give actual examples of how such objectives or research questions can be formulated.

When examining such material, note the warnings they provide about trying to 'prove' things in research, or even trying to show how one element 'causes' or 'affects' another (for example, does the lying programme affect or improve standing balance?). Even large studies can struggle when taking this kind of approach – see, for example, deficiencies in the expensive, Government-commissioned research into conductive education by Bairstow et al (1993). It is generally better to adopt a more exploratory approach. Try to enhance understanding of an issue, or collect evidence for and against a possible 'cause and effect' (for example, not only evidence which suggests that a lying programme might improve balance, but also considering what other possible 'causes' for the improvement there could be).

Literature review

Your next task will be to map out what has been written already about your research topic, usually in a 'literature review'. This is not easy in conductive education, where literature is available in different formats (printed and online), of different kinds (articles, blogs, promotional material), and in different languages (English, Hungarian, German).

There are also, of course, different perceptions and controversies which surround conductive education's theory and practice. You might already have started to recognise these and to note where publications, including research studies, demonstrate either credible or less persuasive understandings of the approach.

So, while a Google Scholar search will produce a seemingly impressive range of publications about conductive education, these are likely to be based on many different kinds of interpretations of the field. How can one work out which are about what you understand to be conductive education, and which are about something else?

It is important for you, the researcher, therefore, when putting together your project, to understand the origins, context and motivations of the literature which you examine. You should scrutinize the ways in which the ideas expressed form the basis for a persuasive and trustworthy understanding of conductive education (but not necessarily the same as your own). You should find yourself not just describing the literature but critiquing it, and from this critique come the ideas which inform your own investigation.

Insider/outsider investigations

One particular way of looking at literature on conductive education is to work out what kind of published accounts are available and what impulses might underlie their particular perspectives. Two fairly distinct types can be identified.

On the one hand, there are the narratives which emerge from personal experience of some kind. Authors may include service users or their families and conductors or other professionals practising in the field. These have 'insider' experience and perspectives, personal and professional. Examples include Lind (2000), a parent researcher, who described the

usefulness of conductive education in children's everyday lives; and Baker (2009), a conductor, who examined the enhancement of child-parent interactions within the context of conductive education.

On the other hand, there are accounts of conductive education whose authors are 'outsiders'. These view conductive education from more distant, less involved standpoints. A very early example was Oliver (1989), a prominent disability activist, who famously described conductive education as 'theoretically unproven, practically unsubstantiated and ideologically unsound' (p198). Oliver was not wholly wrong, although he might have been missing the context of conductive education and what those who promoted it at that time were trying to achieve (see the response by Beardshaw, 1989).

It is important to recognise that insider and outsider perspectives both have their advantages and disadvantages. Insider research might have expertise in its favour, but it can easily succumb to bias and be less conscious of wider social and professional contexts. Outsider research may have greater potential for objectivity but might lack secure understanding of the approach and allow other agendas to unduly influence its scrutiny.

Explanation

In a situation where interpretations of conductive education can differ so strongly, you may also need to consider, early in your writing, what conductive education means for you and how this understanding underlies your research, and to present these perspectives in your project. If you think that this is not necessary, take a look at literature on other topics – you will invariably find an early chapter about definition. For instance, a publication on children's play may start by asking 'What is Play?', or one

written about individuals with head injuries may start by defining 'head injury' itself.

You can consider the nature of conductive education either in your introduction or in the literature review. Your discussion might involve critically comparing different published definitions, then using these and your personal understanding to produce a meaningful explanation of your own. This might not necessarily be acceptable to all, but it should be persuasive enough to provide a secure basis for your project.

Methodology

A major task in your research will be to design an overall methodology and choose suitable methods for collecting data. These tasks involve making important decisions about what kind of data you need to address your research questions; how such data can be gathered and from whom; and how exactly these research participants will be involved. Your choices will be influenced by your own motivations and by the principles and ideologies you associate with as a professional and researcher.

You are likely to start by looking at the suitability of particular research designs or frameworks. Choices might include case-study or ethnography, or something more adventurous, such as the Mosaic approach (Lyndon, 2019) or Q-methodology (Rhoades and Brown, 2019).

Within your chosen framework (if you have chosen one – you may not need to), you will then decide on one or more specific data-gathering methods, such as questionnaires, interviews, observation or document analysis. A key concern is to select data-collection methods carefully, so 'misfits' – when a method is selected when others would be more advantageous – do not occur.

For instance, questionnaires may seem an attractive option for gathering the views of research participants but are difficult to design, responses can be low, and they may produce limited in-depth data – depending on the nature of the research, interviews may be a better option. Similarly, observations can capture activity and behaviour in a conducive group, but it might be worth undertaking follow-up interviews, so that participants can rationalise and explain what exactly was done and why.

Whichever framework and methods are chosen, it is important to develop understanding about their advantages and limitations and to decide how to make the most of the former and reduce the influence of the latter.

Ethics

Involving service users in research can be particularly enlightening and bring benefits for both the research and its participants. As well as producing informative and interesting data, such contributions may trigger feelings of empowerment and allow individual voices to be heard.

However, the involvement of service users in your project means that ethical questions and dilemmas will need to be addressed – consent, confidentiality and sharing of data, for instance. While your own practical experience can to some extent prepare you for this, allowing you, for instance, to ask participants in sensitive ways to talk about their feelings, experiences or aspirations, there will be dangers too: for instance, your daily contact with such participants may mean you forget how your investigative role as a researcher should differ from your educational role as a conductor.

You will also be making decisions about how your chosen methods are piloted and the data

analysed. If you are conscious of the dangers of subjectivity and bias, and take steps to limit these, then your emerging data should be informative and trustworthy enough to address your research questions in meaningful ways.

Writing and dissemination

Perhaps the most important and challenging element of research is reflecting on data and identifying findings which emerge from the research process – after all, these are the fundamental reason for you carrying out the investigation. You should seek to be honest and critical when summarising the outcomes of your research and ensure that the ideas presented are credible to your reader, for instance that they emerge persuasively from the data you have collected. As part of this you will wish to evaluate what you consider to be the successful elements of your research plans and those which perhaps did not go as well as expected.

Finally, you should return to the commitments you initially made to the conducive community in general and to research participants in particular. For instance, you may have promised to share outcomes of the research once completed. Whilst the feeling of completing and handing in your research project is a kind of relief, fulfilling this undertaking may be another task you need to complete.



Summary

As can be seen, there are plenty of decisions to make. Undertaking research, and investigating conductive education can bring additional complications. But the need for research in this field is possibly even greater than in others, so be reassured that in completing your

enquiry, you will have the satisfaction of contributing in important ways to understanding and development, not just of your own ideas and practices, but those of others too.

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Dr Tunde Rozsahegyi is a qualified conductor and is currently Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Education, University of Wolverhampton. Her PhD examined stakeholders' outlooks on the early development and learning of young children with cerebral palsy and the relevance of these perspectives to children's observed experiences.

★ PRACTICE ★

Practise Based Learning Through MD Conductor Course The Power of the Plinth – a reflection on change management

Kriszti Turner

Introduction

The MD conductor training course, delivered by NICE Conductive College, has opened up a new gateway for learning for experienced practitioners of CE settings with an existing BA honours degree. The course utilises the practical and academic skills of people who have the passion and commitment towards the philosophy of CE and the experience of working in a conductive team.

I have been privileged to be accepted on the course. I have dedicated over a decade to working with children in a CE centre as an Early Years Teacher alongside both British and Hungarian senior and junior conductors. These professionals not only opened up the philosophy of CE but also encouraged my learning throughout my whole career.


The academic element of the course is delivered by NICE Conductive College, while the practical side is work based with a designated Practice Tutor. All academics and professionals involved in the delivery of the course link up to support, manage and guide the learning of students.

Observations prior to formal examinations give opportunity for an open dialogue between tutors, students and mentors. Following an observation of my chosen exam group I was handed a challenge – if I chose to accept it – of transferring the lying tasks series from the floor/mat to a plinth programme.

Change Management: plinth or no plinth? That is the question...

The plinth is an iconic piece of CE equipment that carries so much history and defines the essence of a multi-faceted teaching tool. The task at hand for the exam group was to re-design the smooth flow of the daily routine to incorporate the use of large equipment, maximising classroom space and managing time.

The change management process required continuous dialogue, positivity from all involved including the children of the group who have fully embraced the procedure, given feedback and thoroughly enjoyed participation.



...implementing change is not a question of defining an end [but] it is a process of interaction, dialogue, feedback...recycling plans, coping with mixed feelings and values...frustration, patience and muddle. The point is that rationality has to be applied not only to defining the end of change but also the means (Everard and Morris, 1996, p220).

During a course of seven weeks the group's lying tasks was adjusted to the plinth programme with the expert guidance and support of my Practice Tutor, (the group has four members

and attend sessions once a week). The children decided to give marks out of 10 in relation to how they rated the difficulty levels of the tasks (10 being the hardest). This gave us an indication of what they found most challenging. All the higher scores were given for movement on the plinth such as sliding to the side, lying on the side, rolling over, moving around on all fours and going under the plinth.

Whilst the children were being challenged by the plinth, we were noticing the impact of this challenge upon the children. The most noticeable of these changes were evidenced in their ability to recognise spatial boundaries, and an increased level of motor control whilst negotiating their own area. This increased spatial awareness had positive impact upon the precision and skilful execution of their movements. Not only did the group have better understanding of space but also their own bodies. This was most noticeable when carrying out balancing tasks; self-correction became a clearer concept with less and less verbal or manual interventions.

The whole experience has had a profound impact on my preparation, planning and delivery of the session. My focus has been upon adapting my preventative instructions, along with constructive feedback to support the learning whilst keeping the dynamics of the group at a highly motivated level. All of this in return made my observational skills more acute and has given me a clearer bigger picture of the synergy of the daily routine for the group. This experience not only impacted on my delivery of this group's session but it enabled very positive and constructive dialogue amongst colleagues regarding CE principles, methodology, comparative and reflective views on past and present practices.



Conclusion

Moss (2001,p133) calls reflection a 'lens which helps us to make the invisible visible and to see what is visible in a different light.'The notion of co-teaching and sharing expertise between staff is a practical, viable, realistic and empowering process that has benefited the team as a whole. Time for reflection is at the centre of exchanging thought, to develop, to question and to enquire, in order to enable a more reciprocal learning process. Placing value on time to unfold, discover, question and even provoke each other's thinking boosted collegial relationships within the team.

The power of plinths as a learning aid has always been a well-known fact and this reflection is not trying to re-invent something unique or come up with a revolutionary new idea, it is simply trying to reiterate that a simple change process through observation of another professional can make a positive impact on practice. This is perhaps best summarised by Cranfield who writes that...

Sweeping and profound changes are occurring everyday at the workplace, but we still long for our basic human needs to be met-meaningful relationships, creative fulfilment, and the knowledge that our work is valued and valuable. (Canfield et al, 1996,pxxii).

Seeing the potential and projecting Intelligent Love is the core of CE. Now I have experienced it towards my own professional development from all the tutors from NICE, from my Practice Tutor and my colleagues.

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Kriszti Turner has been a team member in S'n'S since 2002 and been working as an Early Years Teacher since 2009. She is currently undertaking the MD Conductor course delivered by NICE. You can contact her via email: kriszti@stickstep.org

★ THE CONDUCTIVE GROUP: ★

A Social Basis for Learning in the Modern World

Elizabeth Rowley

Introduction

Conductive Education is a unique and highly specialised system of education which aims to teach those with neurological motor disorders how to problem-solve their movement difficulties and lead more active, independent lives (Carlstedt and Abonyi, 2010; Malmström 2010).

As a social model of learning, conductive education (CE) values the group as a unique pedagogical tool. This paper presents some of the relevant theoretical underpinnings, raises some challenges to the group approach in the light of today's focus on the individual and poses the question of whether we are in danger of losing this unique and powerful tool.

The purpose of the group

The primary aim of CE is to develop an 'orthofunctional personality'; i.e., the ability to problem-solve and use a range of strategies to achieve one's goals, adapting to the various changing demands of one's environment or society (Gegenwarth, et al, 2012; Brown, 2010; Medveczky, 2006; Schenker, 2005; Hári and Ákos, 1988). Drawing upon the ideas of social constructivist theories current during his lifetime, András Pető, the founder of CE, believed the conductive group to be the most effective pedagogical tool to achieve this, (Gombinsky, 2005; Gegenwarth et al, 2012).

“The group is the principle vehicle for interpersonal relations in Conductive Education” (Hári & Ákos, 1971: 205).

Theory of the Conductive Group

The conductive group is thus fundamental to the practice of CE, and as such is a key tool used by the Conductor to facilitate learning in the individual. Based on Vygotsky’s theory of social learning (Daniels, 2005), CE recognises the importance of human relationships, linking social and psychological aspects of learning and using the psychologically facilitating effect of the conductive group upon the individual learner (Frøysang, 2009). It also draws on Vygotsky’s belief in the importance of cultural influences and shared meaningful experiences, with the individual responding to and developing goals in relation to his social context (Brown, 2010; Tatlow, 2005). Often referred to as a ‘collective’, Pető also drew upon the work of Anton Makarenko in recognising the importance of ‘collective responsibility’, the success of each individual becoming the success of the whole group (Gegenwarth, et al, 2012; Hári and Ákos, 1988). Pető also drew upon the work of Moreno, using the interpersonal relationships within the group as a facilitation for developing the orthofunctional personality of the individual (Tatlow, 2005; Szörényi, 1991; Hári & Ákos, 1988). It is the role of the Conductor to create this atmosphere of shared experience and to develop effective interpersonal relationships within the group.

The group in practise

In order to ensure group cohesiveness and to foster an atmosphere of shared problem-solving and success, tasks are designed by Conductors for the whole group and differentiated to enable learning at individual level of potential. This ensures cognitive understanding for each

individual and the creation of intention, as well as maximum activity, learning and success alongside their peers within the group (Beck, 2010; Hári and Ákos, 1988). This process, which relies upon the effective use of conductive observation – specifically comparative observation (Brown, 2010; Hári, 2002; Hári and Ákos, 1988) – ensures group cohesiveness and exerts a powerful psychologically motivating influence upon the individual. The conductive group may thus be considered a psychological facilitation (Hári and Ákos, 1988).

This use of the conductive group as a psycho-social ‘tool’, combined with a culture of expectation and belief that learning is possible, form part of the overall external learning environment (Illeris, 2009). Within this environment, Pető also placed the utmost importance on the trust between Conductor and child as a psychologically facilitating influence (Brown, 2006).

Conclusion

Since its origins in Hungary, the practice of Conductive Education has evolved to meet the demands of an increasingly wide range of socio-cultural contexts. The need to ‘fit into’ such contexts, to gain acceptance and often funding, can at times pose a challenge to the group approach. This seems particularly so in the light of today’s focus on the individual; e.g., individual rights, targets and learning plans, and the question arises whether we are increasingly being required to adopt an approach to planning that starts with the individual, rather than the group? Are we in danger of losing this unique and powerful tool?

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Liz Rowley is a conductor with more than 30 years' experience. She is currently a Lecturer at NICE Centre for Movement Disorder. She teaches on a range of UG and PG modules and courses.

★ THEORY INTO PRACTICE ★

A Reflective Portfolio of Supervision Development Within a SEN Setting

Lizzie Bell

Introduction

Supervision has been an aspect of my role at Ingfield Manor School for over 10 years; I have supervised professional and non-professional team members as well as undergraduate student-conductors and trainee teachers. It was therefore with great interest that I embarked upon the Dynamic Supervision module as part of my Masters in Conductive Education and Special Needs. As professionals working in busy centres and schools, it is rare that we give ourselves the time to reflect on our own practice and I looked forward to having the opportunity to learn more about myself as a mentor, knowing it was becoming an increasingly significant aspect of my role. I also became more aware of the parallels that can be drawn when comparing the supervisee/supervisor relationship and the teacher/pupil relationship. Good teachers fully appreciate how the interaction they have with the pupils in their class can either positively or negatively impact their learning. Equally significant are the interactions we have with the students and staff we supervise and, helpfully, this is supported by the wealth of research into the area. For the purposes of my assignment, I chose to focus on supervision sessions I had carried out in recent months with members of staff developing their leading skills. I then sought to critically analyse my role, attempting to drive improvement through the application of various aspects of the models I researched.

Research

Effective supervision in any professional setting, provides a space in which reflection and learning can flourish (Henderson et al., 2014). Inextricably linked to the process of supervision are the roles of mentoring and coaching, particularly within the context of education and special education, where these methods have been used for several years leading to a growing professionalisation of these tools as a way of developing learning (Burley and Pomphrey, 2011).

In teaching, the focus of supervision should always be to consider the needs of those, who although themselves are not present in the supervision session itself, are in fact the ones the supervisee is serving (Henderson et al, 2014). Therefore, it is interesting to draw parallels between the way we develop teachers and how they then teach their pupils. If we take the view point that an effective mentoring/coaching relationship is the result of social interaction, it mirrors the findings of Vygotsky (1978) who stated that social interaction is the key to how we make sense of the world as children and therefore how we learn (Livingston and Shiach, 2010). To fully appreciate the impact of effective supervision in a SEN setting, it is beneficial to critically analyse the research and, based on our practical experience, to determine how it links to the release of potential in those we are supervising and those they are teaching.

Supervision, mentoring and coaching

Henderson et al (2014) define supervision as involving three tasks including supporting and encouraging, ensuring supervisees know how to do what is expected of them, and that they have the necessary support to uphold agreed standards. The mark of transformative supervision is that the supervisee will have moved from being a reflective thinker to a critical reflexive thinker who is able to make thoughtful observations about their work (Weld, 2011).

Regarding mentoring and coaching, there is general agreement that the terms overlap considerably (Garvey et al. 2014). Lofthouse et al. (2010) provides some clarity by proposing that coaching is more useful in the context of schools as it suggests more of a professional dialogue aimed to develop a teaching repertoire. In contrast the purpose of mentoring is ascribed to more of a gatekeeping role with an organisational motive. Coaching allows a learner to work towards new goals as well as affirming what has already been done (Tolhurst 2010). For the purpose of this article it is more helpful to use the terms interchangeably, given the many similarities.

When viewing supervision as person centred and as having a foundation of social interaction as highlighted previously, the use of conversation is a regular theme, the benefits of which are highlighted as follows:

‘Conversational learning develops wisdom and practical judgement – the products of holistic critical learning.’ Garvey et al (2014, p.115)

Effective coaching conversations promote the development of trust, openness, honesty and integrity as well as enhancing skills and understanding in the workplace (Daloz, 1986). Megginson and Clutterbuck (2005) devised a conversation typography to aid mentoring conversations which includes seven layers.

Social dialogue is one of the layers which Garvey et al (2014) argue should be a constant feature of coaching. It allows the development of those key, oft repeated qualities of mutual understanding, empathy and trust. Henderson et al (2014) state that mutual trust is integral to the supervisory relationship if a safe working space is to be created, and that honest communication is a necessary prerequisite for this.

Alongside evidence of key qualities resulting from social dialogue, there is also plenty of evidence of the corresponding features of an effective coaching conversation which provide the framework out of which these qualities develop. The following provides a brief analysis of some of these features with examples from some of the most well-known models:

Goal setting: The GROW Model (Whitmore, 1998) designates goal setting as the basis of a 4-stage coaching journey. It allows the supervisee to establish a goal by asking them to look at what they want to achieve in the context of what they think they will be like should they reach their goal (Bates, 2011). Grant (2006) argues that setting goals is a non-negotiable feature of coaching. Garvey et al (2014) however, issue a warning, surmising that goals could become more useful for the supervisor in terms of allowing them to structure the conversation to serve their own agenda and not necessarily the agenda of the supervisee. A coach could safeguard against this by remembering one of the key advantages of goal setting is to allow the learner to take ownership and gain greater insight into themselves by being more proactive (Tolhurst, 2010). If this is at the forefront of the coach’s mind then it should successfully determine their agenda.

Questioning: Costa and Callick (1993) identify provocative questioning as providing a

clarifying role during supervision. Asking questions helps the mentor to understand the root of a problem as well as helping them to pinpoint the context in which the problem is taking place (Bates, 2011). Weld (2012) considers asking questions to be a significant part of the supervision journey, stating that in order to be actively involved in this process, the supervisee needs to take risks in their enquiry and move beyond safe questioning. Bates (2015) encourages provocative questioning, whilst taking care to emphasise the need for this to be done within a relationship based on trust and respect where failure is not feared.

Active Listening: Kline (2010) describes attention as:

‘Listening with palpable respect and without interruption’ (p.2).

It is within this environment of active listening that ideas and creativity emerge. Kline (2010) distinguishes between listening with the purpose of replying as opposed to more productive listening with the intent to ignite creativity. Henderson et al (2011) defines active listening as including skills such as reflecting, paraphrasing, summarising, focusing and questioning and states that this is an important part of supervisor and supervisee maintaining a working alliance.

Feedback: Providing effective feedback is closely linked to listening carefully to what a supervisee has said and confirming they have been understood (Gould and Roffey-Barensten, 2014). If done well, feedback can have a powerfully positive impact on performance; at worst it can have a detrimental effect (Tolhurst 2011). To facilitate a positive outcome, Hawkins and Shohet (2012) highlight five important principles necessary for giving effective feedback: Clear, Owned, Regular, Balanced and Specific (CORBS). The word ‘owned’ allows the supervisor to remember their feedback is their own perception and not ultimate truth; being mindful of this will naturally promote a more balanced two-way process.

The link between supervision and the special needs learner

Consistent throughout the aspects of supervision highlighted is the importance of empowering the supervisee to recognise their skills and their potential to grow within the context of effective support, challenge and encouragement. The same applies to the environment needed for our special needs learners to flourish. Vygotsky regarded the way we refer to children with SEN as an important starting point for how we support their learning. He wrote, ‘A child whose development is impeded by a disability is not simply a child less developed than his peers; rather he has developed differently’ (Vygotsky, 1993, pg.30). Vygotsky believed that educating children with a disability would involve alternative but equivalent paths for development, and that a group of peers led well by a teacher provides the best context for working towards potential (Gindis, 1999). Wink and Wink (2004) define being well led by a teacher as providing a climate of deep and integral respect for people and learning, underpinned by a foundation of care, concern and love. It is within such a context that students feel safe and able to learn. Noddings (1992) went as far as to describe teaching as similar to a parenting role.

The SEN teacher may be met with children who have little or no belief in themselves as learners and therefore their nurturing role cannot be underestimated. Daniels et al (2007), stated that when starting school, a child with a physical disability could develop a very negative self-image as a result of both objective learning difficulties and the attitude of peers and teachers, providing an educational framework that could limit aspirations. A supportive environment, however, could allow the same child’s learning to accelerate. Dweck (2006) recognised that a teacher’s belief in a child’s ability to learn is particularly important for those

with poor self-esteem. Cummins (2001) states that it is through our human relationships in the classroom that we negotiate our identities and that these same relationships have the power to either encourage or discourage collaboration and self-development.

The qualities that come from a positive relationship between teacher and pupil, in the SEN classroom, are therefore much the same as those that come from a successful supervision process between educator and supervisee. The features highlighted above of good social dialogue in supervision, are also the features of good interaction between student and teacher. For example, when measuring the success of the different approaches put in place with the use of pupil premium funding, Higgins et al (2013) found effective feedback, to have a very high impact on learning. They found that feedback was most successful when given in the context of the student having received a challenging goal, and that it needed to be meaningful and specific, focusing on what was right rather than what was wrong and ultimately, encouraging to the learner.

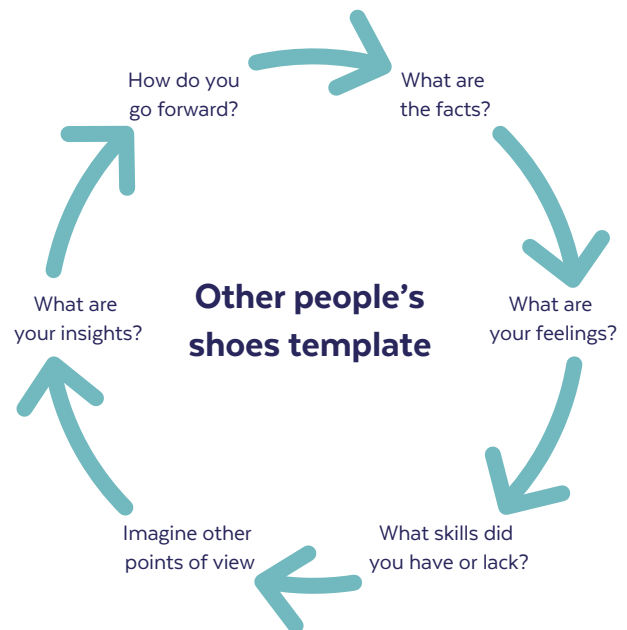
Hari (1989) when describing a system of learning for students with Cerebral Palsy, explains that a good teacher must give their student a goal within an environment where they have the confidence and security to reach it. She regarded that to give and maintain human dignity and freedom, the SEN learner needs to be given the tools to achieve their goal without feeling that someone else had done it for them. This supports the findings on the importance of the supervisee taking ownership for their development (Tolhurst, 2010).

Goal setting and feedback are therefore good examples of the parallels between the way teachers nurture their students and are nurtured themselves.

My experience of applying supervision techniques

Throughout this process I have gained a greater appreciation of the importance of reflection to inform supervision and allowing time to reflect on myself as a supervisor. Heron's (1990) model of help considers two contrasting styles of mentoring, ascribing cathartic, catalytic and supportive as being the qualities relating to a facilitative style, as opposed to authoritative characteristics which he highlights as being prescriptive, informing and confronting. Using this model, and the feedback I gained from Johari's Window (Luft and Ingham, 1955) (based on four people I had supervised previously) I identified myself as leaning towards being a facilitative helper.

Before undergoing the above research, I recorded a supervision session with a team member who I had been supporting. To help my reflection after the session I used the following tool:



In summary, having carried out a detailed analysis using the tool, I concluded that my 'busyness' put me at risk of rushing supervision sessions which could make the supervisee feel devalued. Although I created a positive environment, I identified that my listening skills were not as good as I had previously thought. I didn't give the supervisee enough opportunities to direct and take ownership of the session, further perpetuated by my lack of structure.

Going forward I decided I needed to better prioritise the time, ensuring the session was planned in advance so that goals were set, listening was active, were intuitive, based on what is being said, and feedback is meaningful and specific.

I put these findings into practice as I began supervising a second member of staff. Knowing this individual well and having an awareness of her lack of confidence and self-critical nature, I was keen that my feedback follow the findings of Gould and Roffey-Barensten (2014) by being clear and honest about strengths and areas for development, ensuring it was helpful and that there was motivation to improve. In contrast to my previous sessions I gave immediate positive feedback following the lesson and prioritised time to type a plan for the meeting, as well as asking the supervisee to come prepared to give her own feedback. On the assumption she would be feeling nervous, I wanted to make sure I started with clear, positive feedback that focused specifically on what went well so that she didn't feel it was empty praise. Mindful of my facilitative as opposed to authoritative style, and knowing the potential I saw, I wanted to make sure I clearly articulated how I felt she could develop and what she needed to do. I had a copy of the plan for myself and for her in the hope that it would begin a 'journaling' habit, as suggested by Proffitt (1975) to improve my reflection. My feeling after the session was that it did not feel rushed; my thoughts were more organised and I took time to listen

carefully before responding. Having established an atmosphere of trust and encouragement by giving specific praise, I then asked probing questions which revealed the root of her lack of confidence. This problem was immediately addressed together and because I had allocated sufficient time for the meeting we were able to do this with ease, allowing the supervisee to leave feeling encouraged and equipped to improve her next lesson. Although improved however, I still felt the supervisee needed greater insight and to take more ownership of her supervision. In order to move forward I decided that we needed to move out of a conversational comfort zone (Garvey et al. 2014) which would be easy to stay in because of our established relationship. I therefore videoed the next lesson to watch together at our following supervision session. I had used video in the past and found it to be helpful. Lofthouse et al. (2010) states that video allows teachers to have a unique perspective giving greater insight into pupil engagement. My intention was that this would encourage greater ownership. I also adopted an element of the GROW method (Whitmore, 1998) by asking the supervisee to establish her own goals at the beginning of the session. Finally, as a consequence of feedback and enabled by questioning, I wanted to allow time for the supervisee to establish her own plan of moving forward.

Happily, the next lesson demonstrated several areas of improvement and it was clear that the learning from our supervision session had been applied. This provided a positive starting point for the supervision session as I could give specific feedback directly relating to how she'd improved. Asking the supervisee to set her own goals, was met with initial hesitancy, but given thinking time she was able to articulate her hopes for the session and it set the tone for her taking a greater lead. Although apprehensive, there was an appreciation of the benefits of using video and the dialogue when watching it together felt balanced and productive. It made the praise more meaningful as the supervisee

could see it for herself, recognising the impact she was having on the pupils, whilst also allowing a shared perspective on the areas requiring improvement. When establishing a way forward questioning was used to help formulate actions as opposed to asking for agreement with my suggestions. Overall, conversational input was more equal, and I felt more confident that the supervisee left feeling empowered to improve because she could see how much she had already progressed. She had a greater internal motivation to put in the necessary time to prepare for the next session, knowing the power of her influence on the pupils for whom I knew she cared greatly.

Conclusion

Reviewing my supervision style and the impact it has on the learners at school has been an invaluable process. Central to my findings are those of Henderson et al. (2014) who suggests that vital to any successful feedback is encouragement:

“Encouragement’ with courage at its heart, involves acknowledging strengths while also offering a supportive framework for challenge as needed.’ (p.61).

My aim for future supervision roles is that supervisees leave sessions feeling affirmed, challenged and motivated to continue in their drive towards improvement. The many models of supervision provide frameworks from which the supervisor can draw elements most useful for their development. Personally, the key to growth

was allowing time for reflection, journaling, which necessitated planning, goal setting and probing questions (not always natural to a facilitative style) to allow the supervisee to take more ownership of their development.

During the meetings highlighted here and those following, the member of staff I was supervising has become a more reflexive learner, able to analyse and formulate her own strategies for development under the guidance of a supervisor who is now more skilled at facilitating this process. The hugely encouraging consequence of this process has been that the pupils she is leading are in turn, more aware of their own goals and how to achieve them. The member of staff is learning to create an encouraging and challenging environment reflecting the environment in which she too has learnt to grow and develop. She is realising her own potential and seeing it released in her pupils.



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Lizzie Bell is a conductor, and currently Deputy Headteacher at PACES school in Sheffield.
Lizzie.Bell@paces-school.org.uk

★ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ★

Creating a Future for Conductive Education in Canada

Brittany Jennings

Introduction

In recent years, it has become increasingly difficult to hire qualified conductors in Canada. The work visa application process continues to be a challenge and the political climate worldwide has made it more difficult for conductors to find employment in other countries. The model March of Dimes Canada (MODC) once had – to send Canadians overseas to the National Institute of Conductive Education – is no longer a possibility due to Birmingham City University restrictions on international students. These factors have created a predicament for the future of Conductive Education (CE) in Canada. We cannot move forward and hope to grow our CE programs and services without a solution.

When the Conductive College began their Multidisciplinary Conductor (MDC) training, this provided a viable option for MODC. This 18-month post graduate certificate program is awarded by the Conductive College. In order to achieve this qualification the student must have an undergraduate degree, preferably in a relevant professional background (e.g. physiotherapist, occupational therapist, teacher, kinesiologist, etc). Throughout the training, the student must be able to provide evidence of working alongside an experienced conductor with five or more year's post-qualification experience. This conductor must also be a registered Practice Tutor with the Conductive College (taken from the MDC information booklet). The course is split into 4 blocks which each having both a theoretical and

practice based component. Upon completion, the student will have completed 700 hours of practice as well as practical and oral assessments assessed by the college. All the practical assessment criteria are the same as those undertaken by students on the BA in CE, and successful completion of each block demands a grade of at least 50%.

Developing a training program at MODC

Initially, six of our conductors received training in order for us to be practice tutors in the MDC training model. The module focused on how we could support our students, give constructive feedback and develop our own learning and understanding of what it means to be a mentor, supervisor, coach and teacher. Four of our staff then had the opportunity to visit the National Institute for Conductive Education to determine the training model we wanted to deliver. Thus, my role began. I would act as the Lead of Training and serve as a liaison between the Conductive College and MODC. While at NICE, we determined our students would train in non-progressive conditions (ie. cerebral palsy and stroke) and that they would gain experience both in children and adult services.



As we began the training process, my responsibilities grew to include:

- Creating a job title, description and other necessary documents for the MDC students at MODC
- Determining an application and acceptance process
- Vetting potential students
- Developing informal written and oral assignments to further learning
- Supporting the practice tutors at all three MODC sites
- Actively participating in the assessments for all students
- Helping to deliver the theoretical content

time for ideas to come to fruition, as all parties have to get on the same page. In implementing the training, there were a lot of pieces to the puzzle, and many people had to get involved and work together to make this happen. This will continue to be a challenge as we move forward and identify a vision for this training, and determine where we want to take it.

The other challenge our team has experienced is that we are all learning as we go along. This is the first opportunity all of us have had to train conductor students. We have all put pressure on ourselves to do it well and to do it right. Part of my role is to support the practice tutors as well as the students; however I am learning the best ways to do this as I go. I have tried to be very transparent in my role to keep open and honest communication about what is needed as the training has developed. I am open to suggestions from the students, practice tutors, link tutor at the college as well as my supervisors. In order for this training to be successful, it has to work for the team. We have to be able to support each other and feel supported. One tool we have created to help with this is a guideline document for the practice tutors and students to help outline the roles and responsibilities for everyone. This has helped to provide clarity in the training and ensure everyone gets the support they require.

The challenges

One of the greatest challenges with implementing the MDC training was, quite literally, time. Canada is a large country and with our manager on the West Coast, and three Conductive Education sites, we span the entire country from East to West across four time zones. When you factor in the coordination with the Conductive College in England that is five time zones to accommodate, spanning an eight-hour difference. So, communication became a vital skill. This requires a lot of planning and organization to ensure everyone is on the same page.

MODC has always been a strong proponent of CE and one of its strengths in my opinion is that CE is conductor-led. This means that as conductors, we have a lot of pushing power as to what direction we want to take the program. Our voices are heard and new ideas are welcomed. However, as a large organization, it takes a long

The benefits

The main benefit of implementing this program is additional staff who will be qualified to lead conductive programs. As with any workplace, having new staff join your team brings new dynamics and a fresh perspective. Our Conductive Education team have worked together for close to seven years now without having additional full time staff. Embarking on this training has shaken things up and challenged our team to reflect on our practices. Particularly when training students, you need

to be able to justify why we do things the way we do. New staff also means new ideas. Our MDC students come with backgrounds such as occupational therapy, kinesiology and primary school teacher. They come with their own knowledge and ideas, which is essential in any work environment. Many CE environments have worked alongside professionals such as occupational therapists, physiotherapists and teachers and are familiar with the benefits of working alongside these professionals. Recently, a number of our new assistants and students have joined our team with a kinesiology background, a profession which fits quite nicely into our multidisciplinary team. "Kinesiology is the scientific study of human movement, performance and function (College of Kinesiologists of Ontario, 2019). These students begin our MDC training, already familiar with anatomy, physiology, psychology and neuroscience which provides a good foundation for the training.

I feel this training has brought us closer together as a team. We have had to work hard to keep effective communication as we are across four diverse time zones and all have our own class schedules. We have been able to develop new strategies to support each other and have developed our communication skills over the past year. My role as Lead Training Conductor continues to shift and change. I have started to look at how I can support training and continuing professional development (CPD) for the whole team. This has included developing a CPD credit system. This will allow the team to track and reflect on their CPD. Continued professional development is vital to ensure Conductive Education moves forward. As professionals, we need to be aware of new research in the medical field and the world of disability. I have also developed a peer observation system. While our team has seven conductors, we are spread across the country and work in pairs or in some instances, on our own. For those of us who work in pairs, we have worked alongside the same

conductor for so long, that it is sometimes hard to bring out new ideas. By implementing peer observation, we can give feedback to one another, as well as use our observations to give new ideas and spark creativity.

One of my own personal benefits is this has reignited my passion for continued professional development. It has been eight years since I qualified and being a part of this training has refreshed my knowledge and brought a greater understanding of how to teach the students. It is easy to give answers, but much harder to ask the right questions that will guide them to their own answers. As conductors, we work to teach these problem solving skills with our participants, and I find the same is true of teaching our students. The route to the solution is more important than the solution itself (Brown & Mikula-Toth, 1997). While it comes naturally in the CE classroom, it is a skill I am still developing when outside of the session. Giving our students the freedom to try new things, grow and make mistakes without simply giving all the answers is a skill I am developing. So, as I am teaching, I continue to learn. Which has lead me to wanting to pursue my masters in Conductive Education. I see so much potential in this training model. I feel that going down this path should eventually lead Canada to developing their own training program. However in order to do this, we need our experienced conductors to have the education and support to develop and deliver this training. Embarking on the MDC training with the Conductive College was a good investment in the future of CE within March of Dimes as well as within Canada.

Moving forward

I remember years back when I was still a conductor student, March of Dimes identified the need for a training program in Canada. However, it is not that simple. Before we can establish our own training, a number of

pieces need to fall into place. For a college or university to consider implementing a program, Conductive Education needs to gain recognition. We need to establish a home base large enough to accommodate students, and we need conductors experienced and educated in order to deliver the lectures and practicum. This is no small undertaking. But the path we have started down with the MDC training is the first vital step towards establishing our own Canadian training.

Beginning with a post graduate certificate training program is not unlike the origins of many similar fields. If we follow the path of physiotherapy in Canada, these professionals began with a two year diploma, then an undergraduate training and it is now offered as a masters' level program (University of Toronto 2019). While some could – and have – argued that this is a step back for

CE, it is a massive step forward. We are now able to tailor our training to the sites our students will be working in, giving them greater confidence and experience in the location they will be working once trained. Staff retention should also be higher as our students already call Canada home.

While this training currently is an 18-month certificate program, there is the potential for growth down the road. Part of our next steps will be identifying a direction for this growth. This could include developing competencies for newly qualified MDCs, offering up follow-up training on other diagnoses, or looking at a follow-up training that allows these MD conductors to work more independently. There is still a lot of work to be done to determine what comes next and how to move forward while ensuring the preservation of the essence of CE.

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Brittany Jennings is Lead Conductor of Training at MOD Canada. She is currently based in Halifax; bjennings@marchofdimes.ca

★ MY FIRST YEAR AS A CONDUCTOR! ★

Maryum Ashfaq Raja

Where do I begin from? This year has been a rollercoaster for me! I worked in school with the children and then in the adult department! And WOW it has been full of excitement and new challenges. If I could go back I would change absolutely nothing about it and would love to do this year all over again!

In this past year I have learnt that it is not easy being a conductor. You become emotionally, socially and intellectually involved with the people you work with and sometimes this can be difficult when leading. Furthermore, as a student, you never see what is happening behind the scenes, you never see how much extra work staff are doing to ensure they deliver exactly what the children and adults need. Once you start doing the same as a qualified conductor, you definitely appreciate the extra time your practice tutors give you to support you for your exams. A whole years' experience in 2 different departments also enables you with the skills to think quick and adapt to situations which happen unexpectedly and for which you have not planned for. Whether you are working with children or adults, I definitely recommend planning your sessions, write their aims, and write their progress down as this also helps you improve your own leading and teaching skills, **do not lose that!** Also, 1 year of different departments really enables you to learn task series quickly and understand in depth what each task series mean! And I am very proud to say that I now know 9 different task series!! Wow!!

“Knowing more about what you love is how you nurture that love and let it blossom into a rewarding career that you can take pride in”

(Ferrer, 2019). I enjoy being a conductor and I am very passionate about it, therefore I will now be going further into the profession of conductive education through completing my Masters (MA). The reason I am doing this is so that I can increase my knowledge in CE and I know that an MA will open several opportunities in the future and give me a chance to progress in my career. “It is no longer possible to do all your learning at the start of your career, and then spend the rest of your working life using what you have learned...our assets do not remain the same if you do not freshen them...” (Megginson and Whitaker, 2007). In relation to the MA degree, I am also continuing my professional development (CPD). CPD enables you to continue progressing and acquiring skills, knowledge and experience. It allows you to keep up to date with new information and technology in your chosen career and develop further. It ensures that you are learning as you are working, and you can then implement new ideas and knowledge within your own teaching (Megginson and Whitaker, 2007).

The first year of being a conductor is always challenging, it can definitely be scary but at the same time it is very exciting. It is very difficult to switch from being a student to a conductor automatically, however with the support of the team you're working with and outside support it is always a work in progress. In the first year, you come to a realisation that it is not as easy as you think it will be, being a conductor requires you to be **honest with yourself** and with others. If you do not understand something, or if you are unsure, it is important that you **ALWAYS ask someone** or share your concerns, only then can you overcome your fears and will receive the

right support. Being a conductor also requires you to be extremely passionate about what you do and the children and adults you are working with. As a conductor, you are responsible for the education of the children, and responsible in supporting adults to achieve their goals/aims and for this personally I believe you must put your **heart and soul into the job.**

From experience I can honestly say that it does not matter if you have spent more time working with one age group than another, your experience is still relevant to the team, you still have the same amount of experience, but it is just different. Being different is very good, as you bring different ideas and different skills to the team which is always a bonus. Furthermore never ever shy away from taking a risk. If you

are afraid to lead, or do something, you should definitely conquer your fears and do it because you will honestly learn so much more from it and it will help you see things another way.

It is definitely important to remember, that every conductor brings something different to the team and group. They have something unique to offer, whether it's working with the children or with the adults. It is your personality and your experience which shape you as a conductor. You should never be afraid of allowing yourself to shine through and should definitely take risks and challenges, as these opportunities only enable you with experience and more knowledge which will then shape you as a conductor.

Be CONFIDENT in yourself, your skills, your experience and your knowledge!

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Maryum Ashfaq Raja is currently a conductor at NICE Centre for Movement Disorders.

★ RESEARCH ★

Application of Conductors' Perceptions of Expertise

Dr. Theresa Kinnersley

Introduction

The focus for this article, as an overview of my doctoral research study places the methodology, or the underpinning philosophy at its' heart. I have chosen to do this to demonstrate that it is possible to research CE in a way that aligns CE with all parts and stages of the research process, as well as enabling me to position myself, as the researcher within it. As a consequence, the study is written in the first person, and in the present tense. In summary, the study utilises a constructivist methodology and a pragmatist solution as a means of exploring conductors perceptions of expertise. The findings of the study reflect conductors' perceptions of expertise as a holistic combination of belief, personality, knowledge and skill. The words and phrases used by conductors to articulate these perceptions, are utilised in the construction of a measure of expertise, as the basis of a self-assessment CPD tool. The synthesis of findings suggests that conductors transit along a journey from novice to expert, however whilst some are able to continue developing, others appear to become 'stuck' in position. In part, this journey is influenced by the experiences within the professional environment. This includes the presence or absence of a cohesive peer group, colleagues and role models.

Justification and aims of the study

When working for the NHS as a Registered Nurse, I have been able to follow a structured professional development pathway (Sandehang & Tutik, 2017). This process enables and supports progression, and the development of professionalism (Fetzer, 2003), however it does not fulfil my personal ambitions. Qualifying as a conductor in 2005, fulfils my personal goals, and an opportunity for success at a personal level. At a professional level however there is no structured format for development. At the time, conductors look for solutions for professional development outside the profession. Whilst there may be advantages to this, a means by which development can be centred around the philosophy and practice of CE, serves to close a gap within the profession. Since commencing the study, the opportunity to gain an MA in CE is now possible, and so an academic structure to CPD is made explicit. An everyday CPD tool, constructed from conductors' perceptions of expertise, which can assist professional development at a personal level, however still appears to serve a purpose. My ultimate aim is to support conductors in their professional development, in a manner that strengthens development of CE, and places the conductor at the centre of this process. In particular I want to achieve this in a way that reflects the unique aspects of CE; primarily the belief that change is possible (Feuerstein, 2008), and that

learning is lifelong (Sutton, 2006). My rationale for this study is based upon the premise that if I can explore conductors' perceptions of expertise, I can then create an understanding of expertise from these perceptions. This has the potential to create a conducive perspective on practice, written by and for conductors. These perceptions, articulated by the words, phrases and in the meanings attached to them, are then utilised to form a self-assessment questionnaire, as the basis of a CPD tool. In this way, professional development can perhaps be more structured at a personal level, whilst there is potential to strengthen professional identity at a generic, strategic level.

As identified, the focus of this article, is upon the alignment of the whole study. A significant part of this alignment is awareness of myself as an 'insider-researcher', in particular my ability to behave in an ethical manner throughout. The role of the insider-researcher, in which there is equality with the research participants (Mulhall, 2002), in this case 20 UK based conductors, and in which shared experiences play a significant part, fits well within a constructivist paradigm (Charmaz, 2006). As such, this role requires me to be explicitly 'present' within the study. This means that I recognise the impact of myself within it, my own biases and perceptions that will influence how the study develops. This explicit presence serves to strengthen, rather than weaken the study, and supports the justification for an exploration of individual, rather than generic perceptions of expertise.

Expertise

Expertise as a concept has developed from the mid-1950s into the 21st century. Experience and expertise are related but not linearly (Eraut, 1993); experience is necessary in order to become an expert, however years of experience does not make an expert. Whilst research into what expertise is, what constitutes it, how it

is perceived and how it is achieved remains limited, it is worthy of further investigation. There are few research studies in which perceptions of expertise are explored (Germain and Ruiz, 2009), however expertise itself is identified in person-centred professions, and valued as a significant aspect of professional development. Commonality amongst person-centred professions, of which CE is one, suggests that expert practice includes a mix of knowledge, skill and personal application (Eraut, 2004; Brody & Hadar, 2015). It is therefore appropriate to explore conductors' perceptions of expertise, as similar to, but uniquely different from, other person-centred professions. It is also relevant to explore the ways in which conductors construct these perceptions, and the factors that may influence their construing. As a journey of professional and personal development, this study is grounded in the belief that "the questions we ask do matter", (Charmaz, 2017, p. 34).

Explicitly, the aims of this study are focused upon the following questions:

1. How do conductors construct their perceptions of professional expertise?
2. What are the common priorities associated with the professional expertise of the conductor?
3. Is it possible to measure professional expertise?
4. Can a measure of professional expertise be used to facilitate professional development?

Research methodology

Within a 21st century context, CE can be considered to fit within a Positive Psychology paradigm (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011). The concept of self-efficacy in which expectation is linked to both action and outcome (Law, Ireland & Hussain, 2007) serves to connect aspects of Positive Psychology with both CE and the aims of this study; to empower conductors to reconsider their own practice in a new light, and to perceive development towards expertise as both achievable and essential for actualisation of potential at idiographic (individual) and nomothetic (generic) levels. A constructivist approach, fitting within post-modern career research, enables development of understanding of the individual within their own professional context (McMahon & Watson, 2007). As such, the concept of the individual as an active participant within the research study fits with the professional context of CE in which the individual learner is expected to be active within their own learning strategy (Hári, 1988). Recognition that experience and education are required for a change in internal representation and intention to occur (Hári, 1997), support the aims of this study; to gain insight into conductors' perceptions of expertise, from which to impact practice and professional development. In light of this, it is therefore relevant to explore individual conductor's perceptions, and to use these perceptions to inform the construction of the self-assessment measurement, or CPD tool.

Constructivism

The terms constructivist and constructionist theories are used interchangeably by some (Henson, 2003; Raskin, 2015; Lee, 2012; Clayson, 2013), whilst others recognise a separate identity for each (Wink & Wink, 2004).

Constructivism, originating from Europe in the 1930s, associated with the works of Kant and Piaget (Guterman & Rudes, 2008), is considered to have preceded constructionism (Wink & Putney, 2002; Guterman & Rudes, 2008), attributed to the work of Vygotsky (Wink & Putney, 2002). Although both constructionism and constructivism involve social interaction (Guba, 1990), constructivism is considered a biological, cognitive process of meaning making, where constructionism impacts ideas as a consequence of conversation, and social interaction (Klapper, 2011; Wink & Wink, 2004). The work of Vygotsky, as a social constructionist, (Wink & Wink, 2004), focuses upon the use of language and thought (Wink & Putney, 2002). As such, the work of Vygotsky is central to CE practice and pedagogy (Grundtvig, 2012), in particular its relevance to the impact of social collaboration upon knowledge making (Wink & Wink, 2004). With this in mind a social constructionist approach may appear relevant to this study. Within social constructionism, however, there is a perceived absence of the self (Burr, 2015), in this case the individual conductor. With my aim to gain insight to individual conductors' construing, or perceptions of expertise, this does not appear to be a rational choice.

I want to explore the nature of, and gain insight into, the ways and means by which conductors' perceptions of expertise are both idiosyncratic and unique to them, and similar, or different to others within the profession. In constructivist thinking, reality is considered pluralist, contextual and person-specific (Guba, 1990). The constructivist defines knowledge as existing within the mind of the individual; a consequence of interactions with the external world, and experiences elicited from them (Yilmaz, 2008). Within a constructivist paradigm, truth is never absolute. It is the individual who creates the knowledge and understanding (Guba, 1990), and as such brings with them interpretations and misinterpretations (Dumchin, 2010). Constructions are considered changeable,

as are the realities they represent (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). These realities may conflict and change over time (Guba, 1990; Lyons, 1999), and as such this approach supports professional development, a process in which change is essential. A constructivist paradigm sits comfortably with CE, in which the learner is perceived to be active, rather than a passive victim (Brown, 2006), and as such appears to fit many of the aims for this study. With awareness of a cognitively constructed, rather than factual truth, Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1963), in which the participant is the inquisitive partner actively involved in the research process (Klapper, 2016) fits well with the aims of this study.

Personal Construct Theory

Personal Construct Theory (PCT) is described as a combination of philosophy and psychology (Kelly, 1963), in which the human relationship within the social, or in this case the professional context, is considered pivotal (Klapper, 2011). PCT creates understanding of the individual beyond their thinking to include the personal, subjective interpretation of their reality (Bezzi, 1998). As a process, construing is described as a holistic combination of thought, action and cognition (Kelly, 1963; Marsden & Littler, 2000). Kelly appears to consider the individual's behaviour as representative of the world they perceive, whilst their philosophical stance reflects their individual perspective. Language is used to determine in explicit terms the meaning that a specific event or role has to that individual by definition of what it means, and also what it does not mean to them. Application of PCT creates the opportunity to understand meaning making as individual and contextual, related to specific events or experiences (Borell, Espwall, Pryce & Brenner, 2003; Burr, King & Butt, 2014; Kelly, 1963). The meanings attached to these events are referred to as constructs. Constructs are considered to be bipolar,

hierarchical and inter-connected (Raskin, 2002), enabling events to be prioritised and ordered (Mayo, 2004). This holds significance; the construction of these bi-polar constructs, enables me to understand the words and phrases used in a larger context, and to consider the influence of experience upon construing. By enabling conductors to articulate what expertise means, and equally, what it does not mean to them, gives me access to their individual reality, in a way in which a one dimensional approach may not. Personal Construct Theory enables the tacit (hidden) thinking of the individual, to become explicit (Jankowicz, 2001). This is significant. If tacit knowledge develops through experience (Eraut, 2005), and is difficult to articulate (Eraut, 1993), a methodological approach that enables exploration of these hidden meanings is relevant and appropriate. If it is possible to explore these meanings, then it may be possible to determine the ways in which conductors perceive expertise, and the experiences that influence their perceptions.

Demographic data

With circa 100 conductors registered and working in the UK, the 20 conductors interviewed for this study represent many of the professional contexts in which conductors work in the UK. Demographic data is collected prior to each interview. With both UK and Hungarian trained conductors, the 20 conductors represents both newly qualified and those with more than twenty years' professional experience. Taking the 20 conductors as a group, the average length of professional experience is 14 years.

Data collection method and exploration of the tacit

As identified, Personal Construct Theory, facilitates insight into individuals' discriminating, or construing of their reality (Lambert, Kirksey, Hill-Carlson & McCarthy, 1997; Walker & Winter, 2007), exhibited in non-language based behaviours. This requires it to be applied via a research method that enables the tacit, or hidden meaning of words and phrases, to become explicit, through language. The Repertory Grid Technique (RGT), as an application of PCT (Hagans, Neimeyer, Goodholm, 2000), enables the tacit to become explicit, and so is chosen as the data collection method. As a mixed-methods tool, the RGT creates opportunity to explore the complexities of conductors' construing at an individual level (Lambert, Kirksey, Hill-Carlson & McCarthy, 1997), and enables understanding of the commonalities and differences between these perceptions more generically. The ultimate aim for the researcher utilising RGT is to determine the individuals' mental map (Kuipers & Grice, 2009) of reasoning from which all movement and behaviour is developed. As a subjective mapping tool (Tan & Hunter, 2002), the RGT facilitates articulation of internal perceptual links, and enables comprehension of individual construing. By generating both qualitative meaning and quantitative objectivity (Smith, Hartley & Stewart, 1978) in the form of constructs and numerical ratings (Klapper, 2011), the grid has potential to generate understanding in a way that other methods do not so easily facilitate (Goffin & Koners, 2011; Steed & McDonnell, 2012). In relation to this study, it is not the actions of the expert that I want to explore, but rather conductors' perceptions of actions, and behaviours they perceive to be expert.

Analysis of grid and interview data

The process of analysis is identical for each grid. Application of Principal Component Analysis (PCA) is used to determine the quantitative data, in this case the number of components, or themes held within each grid. These findings subsequently underpin a qualitative, iterative process of thematic analysis. To facilitate this, Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) (Charmaz, 2017) guides an inductive process of initial and focused coding (Charmaz, 2006). In this way, comprehension of each individual conductors' construing is facilitated. Initial coding creates opportunity to explore the words used, and to compare them with the articulation of others. In this way it is possible to expose tacit meaning as unique to the individual, and representative of others (Charmaz, 2006). Focused coding subsequently supports the conceptualisation and categorisation of the data itself. This process enables further comparison and comprehension amongst and between the grid data. Each grid is analysed in turn, adding to the common themes until a representative synthesis of data is generated. As can be seen in **Table 1**, analysis of the bipolar data enables comprehension of the expert, and in contrast, perceptions of the least competent conductor.

Expert	Least competent
<p>BELIEF: Belief creates opportunities for success.</p>	Lack of belief restricts growth.
<p>PERSONALITY: Multi-dimensional.</p>	One-dimensional.
<p>KNOWLEDGE: Pedagogy: Has the knowledge of CE and the desire to teach and learn and to consider both of these dynamically and continuously connected. Has the confidence to bring about change and learning and to convey that confidence to the group empowering the individual. Is aware of the impact of the emotional environment upon learning and is able to manipulate this to IMPACT upon success.</p>	Their poor understanding of the pedagogical role of the conductor leaves them devoid of an interactive relationship with the learner. They are unable to identify or utilise learning opportunities with negative impact for both the learner and themselves. Their perception is of a one-dimensional role in which the teacher teaches and the learner learns.
<p>KNOWLEDGE: Themselves: The conductor understands the concept of orthofunctionality in relation to herself and her role as a pedagogue. She is able to reflect upon her observations and behaviour to bring about personal and professional development with positive impact for the individual.</p>	The conductor has a one-dimensional mechanistic approach to their role and lacks desire or ability to develop reflective skills.
<p>SKILLS: Observation: Their observation of the psychological and the physical, the verbal and the non-verbal their use of intuition and the cognition enables them to be successful as a leader and respond to the needs of both the individual and the group.</p>	Their observations focus upon the actual, not the potential and the abstract detail in contrast to the 'whole'.
<p>Facilitation: Their intention is to bring about change, to enable and to empower, to dynamically interact and to motivate so that everyone learns and develops.</p>	Learning is restricted as the focus is upon achievement of the abstract task, not the emotional and psychological development of the individual.
<p>Communication: Their positive attitude creates the environment for them to be able to use their personality, intuition and communication skills to form trusting and positive relationships with the individual, the group and the team. They communicate their expectations and achieve success as a consequence of their insight and knowledge.</p>	Their negativity and passivity are reflected in their poor observational skills, their reduced ability to set expectations and achieve success and their inability to respond dynamically to the individuals and the environment.

Table 1. Summary of individual grid findings

Synthesis of findings and conclusions

It is relevant to identify aspects of practice that conductors perceive to be expert, and experiences that impact the construction of these perceptions (Edwards, 1998). It is also relevant to consider the ways in which conductors recognise and are able to personify learning within the wider professional context (Dall'Alba & Sandberg, 2006). If synthesis is invention, rather than discovery (Kelly, 1958), then the synthesis of findings enables the

generation of an understanding of expertise within CE as a holistic combination of belief, personality, knowledge, skill (Figure 1).

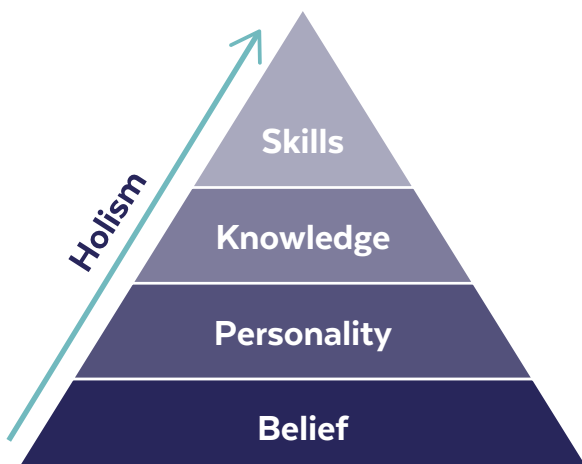


Figure 1.

This supports the need for CE as a person-centred profession to consider its 'moral obligation' (Eraut, 1993) to those who access its services.

Expert practice is perceived by the conductors interviewed to extend to situations beyond the immediate group situation, to include interpersonal connections within the professional team and beyond. As such, expert practice is perceived to encompass a combination of personal and professional experiences, attitudes and motivations. Expert practice is perceived by conductors to include an ability to be authentically personal, within the professional role. Whilst not an aim of the study, it was possible to determine that conductors proceed along a 'journey' of development from novice to expert. As referred to above, experience and expertise are inter-related, but not connected linearly. In particular the ability to use experience, and apply it at a personal level, influences conductors' perceptions of expertise, whilst experience alone is not consistently reflected in their ability to do this. With respect to the experiences that influence the development of expertise, whilst the expert is required to be self-motivated, the working

environment, and in particular the presence of role models is perceived to influence the development of expertise. Of all the findings held within this study, a perceived lack of role models is perhaps the most unexpected, and the most significant. Of the 20 conductors interviewed, only four can specifically identify a role model against which to position their perceptions, and of these four, only one considers themselves to be a role model for other conductors.

The synthesis of findings within this study underpin the construction of the self-reflective measurement tool. The work of Csikszentmihályi, as a contributor to the theory of positive psychology (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011), also influences practice within Conductive Education (Grundtvig, 2012). Application of a pragmatic, positive strengths-based approach from which to utilise the conductors' perceptions of expertise is therefore considered both relevant and appropriate. Adaptation of the Character Strengths and Virtues Questionnaire (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), as an application of positive psychology (Niemic, 2018), is utilised in the construction of the self-assessment measurement tool. The self-assessment CPD tool, is directly linked to the synthesis of findings presented in **Figure 2**. This tool, whilst not a validated measure of expertise, has potential to assist professional development at both individual and strategic levels. With the holistic perception of conductors in the centre of this figurative representation, thematic analysis of the bipolar construct pairs, generated from the Repertory Grid Interviews reflects a perception that expertise in CE is holistic in nature. As such, this holism reflects both the theory and practice of CE.

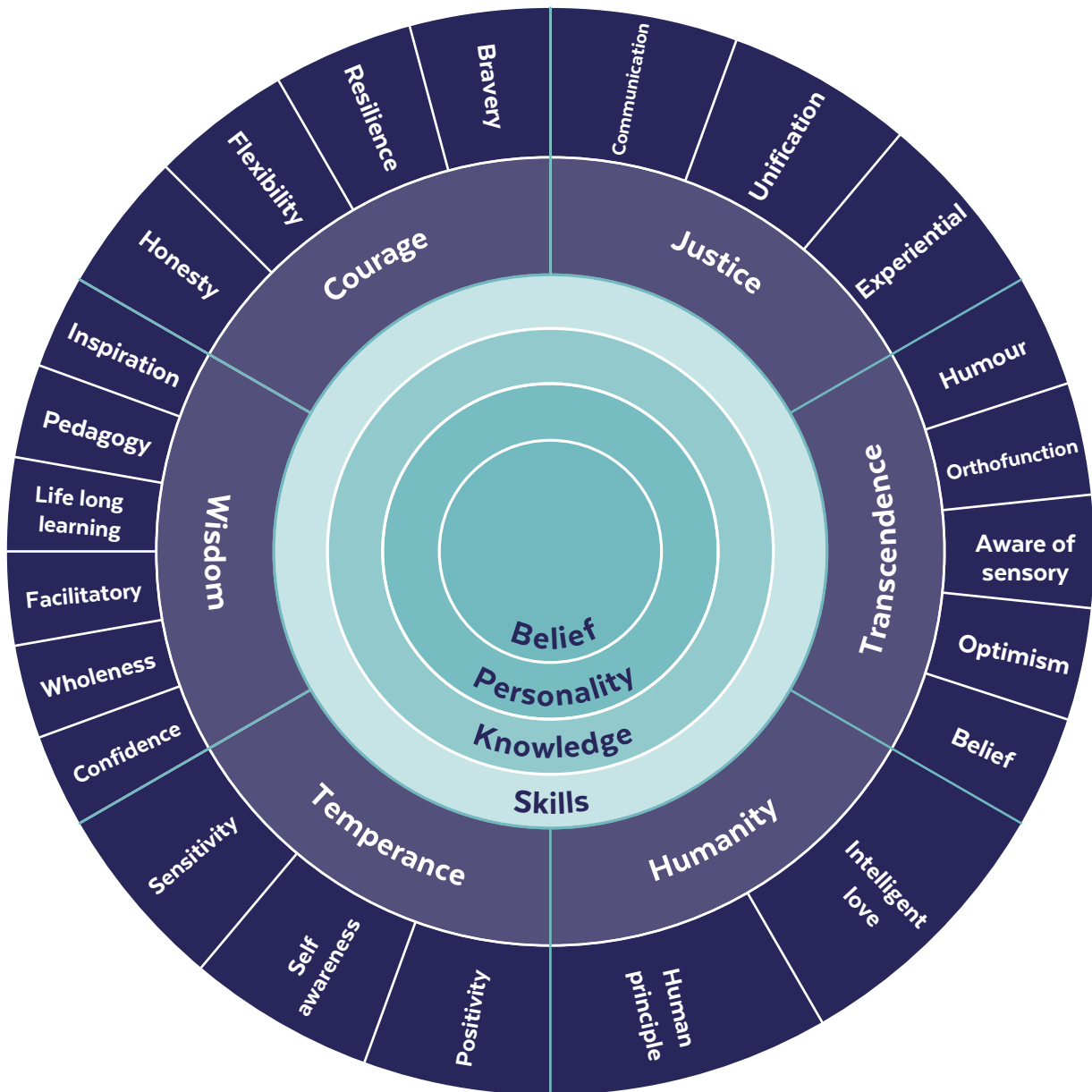


Figure 2.

The process of research study has served to expand comprehension of CE. Perhaps some of the findings were to be expected, however, with a representation of CE as holistic, linked to a tool which enables further professional development, it may be possible for conductors to position themselves within both a CE context, and outside of it. Whilst it may be easier to identify role models as individuals outside the profession, this study raises the need to discuss the presence of role models within the profession. It is hoped however that this article

demonstrates the possibilities for research within CE; that it is possible to research practice as an insider-researcher, that as such it is possible to be strongly positioned within the study itself, and that it is possible to research CE by utilising a methodology that underpins and links all parts of the research with CE itself.

For more information on the study, and to express an interest in participating in the development of the CPD tool please email me at tkinnersley@conductive-education.org.uk

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★ Conductive College Training ★ and Development Opportunities



Over the past 12 months, the Conductive College Team has been active in a number of ways. The BA (Hons) in Conductive Education continues to produce a small number of conductors with both children's and adult's experience. These conductors are employed both nationally and internationally, however the requirements of centres are changing in line with the various socio-political constraints of the time. In particular this impacts the need for conductors, and conductor assistants to take on more responsibility.

The demand for conductors outstrips the ability of training organisations to provide the necessary numbers. Add to this, the increased restrictions to migration across the Globe, CE providers are forced to think more creatively about how they can embrace the potential that already exists within their organisation, embodied in the people they already employ. The Conductive College has responded to these changes. We offer training to graduates, employed in CE schools and centres, to train as Multi-Disciplinary Conductors. These students are expected to achieve the same professional competence as the Undergraduate students. Both theoretical input and practice-based assessments are delivered by the Conductive College, in partnership with the school/CE centre. The uptake for this course is evolving with centres, in both the UK and abroad, involved in this ground-breaking work.

At Post Graduate Level, it is possible to achieve an MA in CE. The first of these students will graduate this year, with another eight enrolled. Some of the CE modules are also offered to BCU students enrolled on the MA in SEND. This is an exciting opportunity for lecturers and conductors alike; to meet with other professionals, to teach and learn at a higher level and to expand the 'reach' of CE.

The Conductive College is constantly looking to expand its portfolio and to make training more accessible. In this respect, work is underway to develop an OCN Higher Level Conductor Assistant Course, expanding into a Level 4 qualification. This course will enable conductor assistants to achieve professional competencies, and academic credits that may be transferable onto the BA (Hons) in CE. This means, for the first time, that assistants will have professional recognition to support their work within group and be incentivised to consider study at UG level.

Working as a conductor is rewarding, however it is also challenging and demanding, and if as a profession we are to remain relevant, a structured system of support is worthy of consideration. At an every day level, the Conductive College recognises the need for CPD specifically for conductors at all stages in their development. We provide development days for conductors at all stages of their learning; whether they are newly qualified, new to the UK, or have been working for many years, and would like time to consider the 'bigger picture' of disability, management and leadership, we have opportunities to suit.

We can also provide support to organisations as services develop in response to the demands of your local population. We are constantly looking to respond to what conductors and CE providers need. If you would like information about any of the above, or would just like to enquire about the training days and packages we offer, please contact Marie McCann at **Mmccann@conductive-education.org.uk**