

Fundamentals of conductive upbringing
In fond and respectful remembrance of Mária Hári

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ABSTRACT. Over many years the author collaborated with Mária Hári, helped her express her ideas in writing and lectured to student-conductors on conductive upbringing. Derived from this experience and in remembrance of Mária Hári the present article offers ten principles underlying conductive upbringing and pedagogy: valuing life, respect for humanity; pedagogic optimism; pedagogic value; tolerance; activity-centredness; communal upbringing; teaching through conflict; integration; bipolarity; complexity.

During the decades of our working together I developed a deep and honest friendship with Mária Hári. I learnt a lot from her during our collaboration and I would sincerely hope that through editing her work and through our conversations and arguments I helped her express her thoughts too.

I was once translating the Hungarian version of an English lecture that she had given, ‘The human principles in conductive upbringing’, into proper Hungarian and preparing it for publication ¹. I had to consult with her a few times in order to make her thoughts clear to everyone. This is when I realised that the human fundamentals of conductive pedagogy should be talked about from different aspects. She too thought that there was great need for this and I therefore decided that every year I would summarise these fundamentals in my pedagogy module for my conductor-teacher students. I would introduce them to the pedagogic fundamentals that I had learnt from decades of studying the theory of conductive pedagogy and from what I have seen in reality through years of observing the practice of conductive pedagogy.

¹ This paper has a complex history. Mária Hári wrote it in French, this being translated into English by Elizabeth Appleyard (then wife of the British Ambassador in Budapest) and only later was this English version translated into Hungarian (Hári, 1997).

The principles of pedagogy can be addressed from two directions: *deductively* from the disciplines of philosophy, psychology, sociology, physiology, and anthropology; and *inductively*, from the practical viewpoint, from the skills gained through generalised experience.

In one of my lectures, ‘The relationship between special and general pedagogy’, I have shared some pedagogic principles generalised from practice (recently published as Bíró, 2006). Now, in remembrance of Mária Hári’s life and work, I will share the principles of upbringing drawn from the general values that I believe have given conductive upbringing its powerful ideology and complex details.

Basic principles characterising conductive upbringing, formulated through the two approaches

1. Valuing life, the principle of respect for humanity

In nature every creature is different and all have their unique qualities. This variety enriches our world; looking after which and making more of it is humanity’s great responsibility. Humanity exists in many different forms and each one of us has unique qualities: expanding and developing these is the duty of those in society responsible for upbringing and what improves human qualities. The child is human too!

So, if we can see a man in the child we can teach him to be a man. (Hermann, 1979, p. 105)

To open the gate of development for children born disabled or adults who have lost their full abilities through accident or illness, we have to accept them the way that they are, we need to recognise their qualities, respect their personalities and love them for who they are. Disabled people, if they receive what is typically human, then they

...gain the opportunity through conduction to use their capacity and the power of their own minds: this way, through their own efforts, they can make the greatest achievements.” (Hári, 1997, p. 11)²

Hungary too has signed the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights and has also agreed the rights of children, and as a result has passed a law making it the responsibility of pedagogues to ‘respect the dignity and rights of children and pupils’ (Act LXXIX, 1993).

The requirements for disabled children’s upbringing are respect for the essential human qualities and the conscious goal-oriented capability that results from conductive upbringing.

2. The principle of pedagogic optimism

Throughout the history of education there have been thinkers who have underestimated the power of upbringing, believing that inborn qualities are the only influences on people. On the other hand there have been those who have practised upbringing and believed that such qualities can be influenced, for example Pestalozzi, Locke, Steiner, Rousseau, Key, Rogers and Makarenko.

Through the development of science today we now know that humans inherit only faculties (dispositions) and that these can be influenced by environment and upbringing. Inherited possibilities cannot become reality without the right upbringing and environment, and in the case of missing characteristics the damaged nervous system will constrain the effectiveness of upbringing.

As a doctor András Pető knew the chances that disabled people would have to lead a full life. He believed that human beings are psychophysiological ³ unities of such a

² Quotations from ‘The human principle’ in this paper are all fresh translations from the Hungarian, by the present translator.

³ The author wrote *pszichoszomatikus* but the English word ‘psychosomatic’, with its automatic assumption of pathology, sits wrongly in this context. It is interesting, however, to consider the implications of the original Hungarian word here, remembering that the effects of mind upon body may potentially be beneficial as well as harmful.

kind as to contain neurological and physical reserves to fix dysfunctions. Based upon this a pedagogic approach is capable of awakening the need for self-development and through this we can create orthofunction.

Modern medicine possesses tested knowledge and data (that Pető could only guess at), for optimism that even in a damaged brain lost functions can be created through a special and complex pedagogic approach. This revelation became the root of Pető's pedagogic optimism and he planted this in his colleagues too. The only people who can become conductors are those who strongly believe that people are 'educable'⁴ and can be directed in a positive way through conscious upbringing. Belief in positive change helps the conductor through each day's tiring and detailed work, and makes periodic failures bearable.

Pedagogic optimism shines through the conductors on to the participants, who multiply their capacity to try and to help to solve their own tasks and to achieve their own short- and long-term aims.

3. The principle of pedagogic value

The duty of pedagogy is to form an adult from the child:

In this way all valuable parts of our personalities must be developed thorough expertise and sympathetic⁵ humanity, for example the personality, the will and the social soul (Czeizel, 1994, p. 275)

Adults create new value by using their abilities but the ability to create something new is itself an ability too. Those who lack abilities can enhance the skills that people need

⁴ Again there is problem here in rendering a Hungarian word into English. Educable here should not be understood in senses that restrict its meaning to mastery of an academic curriculum within the narrow ambit of school but as 'education in its widest possible sense'. The original Hungarian word is *nevelhető*: for examination of *nevelés* in this context see for example Maguire and Sutton, 2004, p. 23).

⁵ *megértő* – understanding, sympathetic, in the sense of the French *sympatique*

people but only through resolute pedagogic efforts, through pedagogic tasks that develop their abilities.

The value is embodied not only in material work but the function comes into existence as a result of a series of endeavours in the individual to do something and the change represents the pedagogic value

...simple operational abilities can be developed through exercises and simple training but the objectives of complex group abilities are so complicated and made up from such inseparable elements (with visible and non-visible connections) that they can develop only during the activity of complex life experience similar to the mechanism of socialisation, the type of practice, structure, dynamic, inner measurement. (Gáspár, 1997)

To create such a pedagogic approach deserves credit in itself. That is why Mária Hári made a valuable comment when she said:

... the student ⁶ has to be interested in learning and has also clearly to recognise and understand what is going on, and really build up the context of what has to be learnt and the action itself.” (Hári, *ibid.*, p. 2)

Economists today speak often of the savings to be made through effort put into human resources. For centuries it has been considered a social duty to look after and teach disabled people. It is known that if you make dependent people self-caring and independent then they will also become useful for the economy of society. If high-care disabled people become self-caring they can become independent. So we may say that successful conductive upbringing contributes value through two different human values towards the economy of society. We therefore have to look at conductors' work as a useful, creative activity!

⁶ i.e. student-conductor

4. The principle of tolerance

Being different is a regular feature of nature. Individuals' different appearances and different personalities make the human race colourful. The spectrum of inherited qualities is very wide, and the potential of possibilities becoming reality is up to nature. People do not, however, seem to understand the 'different' rather than the ordinary; they show refusal, anger or disgust. This reaction is understandable in the case of deviant behaviour. It is intolerable if, for example, those who are talented and seeking new solutions are rejected by their usual environment. It is also wrong if people are disgusted or just passively feel sorry for those who are born with a disability or have acquired one through illness:

We cannot live a full life if we are segregated, only as participants (Hári, *ibid.*, p.1)

In today's highly motorised world, with its low traffic ethic, everyone has a good chance to loose abilities and this chance increases with the spreading danger of terrorism. Society cannot abandon its disabled people behind; they have great value.

It is worth remembering the blind Homer, the deaf Beethoven and the physically disabled Toulouse-Lautrec, who have given us so much with their work.

Many people risk and fritter away their good opportunities and the qualities given to them at birth, through drugs, alcohol and smoking. In contrast those who make such effort in the face of disabilities, to re-create missing abilities for the benefit of others, deserve, much more respect. It is not true that only the able are beautiful. A disabled person too can set a fine human example for the able.

Society's measure of humanity is how it treats the disabled, those who cannot look after themselves or are incapable of leading their own lives.

Those with exceptional gifts also deserve special attention from society. Pupils whose results and talents are above average but whose behaviour often provokes disapproving actions need sensitivity and expertise from their teachers. Even good

aptitudes are discovered only if environmental influences are advantageous. All people have abilities and talents that are unique in their own ways. The pedagogue has to consider this because we can make changes only if we adapt to individual differences and differentiate accordingly.

Families have a big part to play, and pedagogues a bigger one still, in the timely identification of shortcomings in ability and putting an end to them with conscious developmental work. In the same way, it is their job to identify talents, work on them and nurture them as national treasures. To use Endre Czeizel's allegory, talent is 'working the goldmine economically' (*ibid.* p. 201), which means for the whole nation. There are talented people among the disabled too (such as those who paint with their mouth or feet, poets, writers, composers): they deserve even higher respect

5. The principle of activity-centredness

All tasks and co-ordinations⁷ of the nervous system can be done only in some kind of activity; only in the process of meaningful activity does the nervous system get organised. The only successful way to create co-ordination is if we use it for a purposeful action. (Hári, *ibid.*, p. 4)

Human-beings' personal and general skills can develop only through a series of activities. Humans are naturally active creatures but, if their abilities are limited or if their actions are restricted because of restricted environment, their chances to develop their skills are lowered or can even become impossible.

Human beings' actions are always focused upon a specific object or result. At the same time they create objective change (a result successful for society) and subjective change. The objective result is the condition and determinant of the subjective result. Realisation of this connection made Pető fix upon the unsplittable unity of conductive upbringing within action.

Activity itself integrates *operation* (which is activity without a goal) and *doing* (which fulfils the part-goal of activity), but its effects upon upbringing and development are

⁷ It should be remembered that Mária Hári applied the word 'co-ordination' more widely than simply the co-ordination of movements.

increased by the unity and cohesion of social and mental elements. (Gáspár, *ibid.*, p. 64).

Bringing up children, and developing disabled ones too, is effective only if it is by means of activity that enables them to get to know their world, its uses and development in an active way. Activity requires teamwork and adaptation that can lead to new qualities. Adults create their own conscious self-judgement and their own capability for self-development. This is why play, school-work, working, social and socially useful activities are important forces within conductive upbringing that have the power to forming human beings⁸ through their complex pedagogic effects.

6. The principle of communal upbringing

‘What do we mean by reorganising useful joint working?’ Mária Hári asked in her lecture. She answered this way:

That the individual will be able to solve different problems, will be able to work, show an interest in other things rather than his own problems only, and will become a useful member of society. (Hári, *ibid.*, p. 1)

The *arena* for developing disabled children is the children’s community that enables role-taking within a social context. Living in a children’s community helps disabled individuals recognise and evaluate their own abilities and gain realistic self-judgement. Other examples: peer expectations and evaluations have a motivating effect upon individuals, and common interest and the recognition of need are the basis of long-lasting and organised partnership. Within the community individuals’ success and joy multiply and their own will and efforts to succeed are reinforced by others. Through practice individuals transfer this outward urging to do something into inner motivation. This is why conductive pedagogy regards children’s communities as a valuable *upbringing tool*. Only well directed and conscious work by conductors can create a children’s community with a positive atmosphere which can be regarded as having *upbringing goals*.

⁸ *emberformaló* – compare with the word ‘anthropogenic’ used by Ákos and Ákos (1991, Forward (n.p.) and ff.)

An upbringing-oriented community prepares one for living harmoniously in the wider society.

We can conclude that conductive pedagogy considers the children's social collective, the community, where individual development occurs *in the context of upbringing*, as the chief *tool* for forming human beings. Through this disabled people can be developed effectively, which is our *goal*.

7. The principle of upbringing through conflict

Even children live within society. When living collectively there are plenty of parallel and opposite needs and interests, ways between which individuals have to choose. All this means conflict. A conflict situation is closed by a decision that prepares the way for action. Choosing the purpose of the action also bears moral values. Depending upon whether individuals choose to accomplish selfish, petty, egoistic goals, or goals working towards long-term aims that assist others, this is an indicator of their personal morality.

The hierarchy of value-systems is shown through the order in which they are resolved. The selection of the goal and the way in which the action is considered and carried out, are dependent upon the situation, but the actions made during the processes usually show a tendency characteristic of the individual.

Conflicts are a typical part of living collectively; they do not condemn the upbringing or the upbringing and cannot be looked upon (as some do) as a defect. The way to a solution of conflicts is pedagogically crucial, and correct resolution is a formative tool in the upbringing process.

Throughout their growing up and social integration disabled children will find themselves in countless conflict situations that we have to prepare them for so that they will be able to live independent lives. This is why conductive pedagogy does not

try to avoid conflict situations but tries to prepare its pupils to solve them. This is why it is also important that disabled children's upbringing should occur in social communities or, in a reduced version, in children's communities, because this is the only way to provide this complex system where conflicts can have value for children's upbringing.

8. The principle of integration

Human beings are social creatures whose inborn qualities develop only through correct social influences. It is especially through conscious, targeted upbringing that they will become the best that they can be.

In the case of disabled children the preparation to lead independent lives cannot lack social aspects. On account of impairment, disability, handicap, children are provided with special provision and upbringing, special pedagogy⁹ or rather curative upbringing¹⁰. In Hungary they have been using such upbringing brilliantly in an extensive network of separate institutions. Very effective and special formative work has been done in separate institutions but over the past twenty to thirty years integrated education has spread because of realisation of its benefits. This means as soon as possible (if the degree of the disability permits) we will have to provide special-needs children with education and upbringing – in part or in whole – in the majority of schools. According to need, more than one type of integrated upbringing has been developed in practice (Petrik, 2005, p. 441).

Substantial education of disabled children has been done for over five decades at the institute of conductive upbringing. András Pető – before his time – realised that improving movements is not enough for integration into society. Bodily, cognitive, social and emotional skills have to be improved at the same time and the overall effect will be harmonious development of the personality. András Pető's aim was to educate children from his institute in schools for the majority if their mental and physical abilities made this possible. (This is why some of the children from the institute used

⁹ *gyógypedagógia*

¹⁰ *gyógyító nevelés*

to attend a neighbouring elementary school even though the institute also provided elementary education.)

When can children with cerebral palsy be integrated? According to our experience to date:

- if they can move around on their own two feet (or with the use of aids);
- if they are can communicate and express their needs;
- if their mental abilities fit with the classes into which they will be integrated;
- if their social skills allow them to work together with a group or a class.

The aim of conductive upbringing is to integrate disabled children into schools for the majority as early as possible, the conditions and variations of which will have to be discussed elsewhere.

Integration helps the socialisation of disabled children and is also useful for able-bodied ones. The presence of disabled children makes it possible for the majority to learn to work with them and to respect the unusual. This way they can adopt behaviour patterns crucial for the practice of appropriate behaviour.

An integrated classroom is a micro-environment that can be a good starting ground for socially sensitive, empathic and humane behaviour patterns.

9. The principle of bipolarity

Upbringing is a bipolar approach. Pupils are affected not only by input from outside, not only from the direct and indirect influence of pedagogues. They are both the objects and the subjects and active participants in upbringing. Objective results have to show in a pedagogic approach but we also have to see subjective changes too.

The unique basis of conductive upbringing is that outwardly directed change (the task) is accompanied by inwardly directed self-change, showing itself in the process as an inseparable unity:

In the majority of cases, leading (conduction) is not at first visible, it reveals itself in a separate action by the conductors but mostly it is a living part of the children's activities (Hári, *ibid*, p. 6)

The conductor takes part in the activities of the disabled in such a way that she also ensures individuals' independence through brainstorming, planning, carrying out and gaining feedback from an activity. For the children the task is to begin objective change towards a goal, while for the pedagogue this is only a tool to trigger subjective change. The effectiveness of conductive pedagogy lies in disabled children's achieving the state of wanting inner subjective change and learning the way to it, how to do the tasks for themselves.

In the process of upbringing not only does the upbringing affect the child but the child affects the upbringing too. The conductor also changes while working with the children, her pedagogic sensitivity changes, her empathy, co-operative skills, creativity, and her professional experience increase. In this way, through upbringing, both the children and pedagogues improve their coherence, the intensity and dynamic co-operation of the children's and pedagogues' community shape and enrich the human qualities and values of everyone involved.

10. The principle of complexity

András Pető's originality came from uniting different professions that previously dealt with disabled people side by side for the same goal but in different places, different times and in different ways:

By uniting and co-ordinating the different professions the greatest achievement was made, that the human being became once more a united whole ... (Hári, *ibid.*, p. 10)

He did not just harness the different professions together, side by side, but focused the pieces of this jigsaw and created a special structure, and out of the new complex effects of this he created a new profession. The conductor is the practitioner capable

of improving and influencing difficulties in the senses, awareness, speech, movement and communication, all together in a complex way.

The aim of upbringing is improvement of individual abilities but this cannot be parcelled out into improving abilities of the biological or the social kind, or perhaps into bodily, mental or aesthetic kinds of ability.

Activities that have an upbringing-developmental nature presume the inner unity and togetherness of social and mental activities (Gáspár, *ibid.*, p. 65).

Conductors teach their pupils to learn through both learning their actions and through working together and getting to know them directly and indirectly.

In this manner, conductive upbringing denotes the complex upbringing of disabled people in which improvement involves development of all functions together.

The basic principle of complexity is also used in a wider meaning when all the affected parties – parents especially – are co-ordinated through conductive pedagogy. Only through effective co-operation with parents can the abilities and skills be created that empower disabled children for human communication, working with others and consciously improving themselves. Integrating disabled people into society is a complex task as it cannot be solved only by educating those directly affected: we have to improve society's acceptance levels by laws, moral codes and effective practical persuasion.

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