Conductive Education: whatever next?
Towards post-recessionary thinking

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Note: Notes of a lecture given at National Institute of Conductive Education

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2 December 2008

Mise-en-scène (31 August 2011)
A long-scheduled lecture to first-year student conductors, about future developments in Conductive Education, had to be radically restated in the light of the then rapidly emerging implications of the world recession. These lecture notes from the end of 2008 take one back to a time, not yet three years ago, when it was still possible to consider future developments within Conductive Education as occurring as relatively gradual and fairly painless responses to its own internal contradictions (Sutton, 2002). By December of that year, however, it was fast becoming clear that recession might enforce faster, less comfortable developments through the pressure of external forces – social-political changes and particularly lack of finance. It was suggested in this lecture that such major changes in Conductive Education's environment might in the long run offer evolutionary advantages for those willing and able to innovate. A ray of hope!

I prepared these my customary lecture notes both for myself, to keep me on track and on time, and for the students, so that they could at most annotate rather than think about note-taking.

As I started the lecture I did wonder whether I might be in danger of undermining morale but I soon found the students already well up to speed in sensing what was happening to their world (more so that many others in Conductive Education). Some of their friends were not finding work, one student's father had lost his job. The could smell the economic wind and already knew that conductors would not be handed the world on a plate.

Nearly three years later the little world of Conductive Education has been experiencing ever-growing strains and some sharp shocks. With the respect to the wider world of which it is part, I suspect that we all now recognise that we ain't seen nothing yet. It therefore seems reasonable to expect that over the foreseeable future (what that!) Conductive Education may expect further strains, more shocks – and ever-greater need for change.
1. What a time to be asking this question

One way of identifying what is essential within conductive pedagogy, and what is not, is to look at its development, in the context of its changing historical contexts.

• Hence consideration in terms of its historical stages (Sutton, 2006)

Last year I knew what to say about what might be needed and what might come next

• Only eleven weeks ago, at the start of this semester, I would have said much the same.

But now? What has changed?

• WORLD RECESSION!
• Nothing will ever be the same again!
• Whoever you are, whatever you do, wherever you live/work!
• and that goes for everything and everyone in Conductive Education too.

What would I have said, when this semester started 11 weeks ago?

I would have started by talking about the possible switch from 'international' to global'

• again, see Sutton (2006)

I would have offered examples of the predicted shift, brought about largely by internal contradictions

• between the mode of CE production
• and the relations of CE 'production'

I would have suggested that CE's practice has fitted (increasingly?) poorly with its direction and economics

• with many conductors working in almost any way other than how they are trained to
• and with users often demanding from it things that it was not designed to provide.

New ways of working (new modes of CE production) are bound to emerge in this situation

• with new goals and values
• with new practices, some good, some bad
• and with a new generation who may be in contradiction with the old
• and having to await 'dead men's shoes'.

New 'modern' factors would serve to increase this internal stress, for example

• new structures (relationships) for Conductive Education
• new 'people' in CE, that is significant people (so more potential conflict with the old)
• the Internet (blogs, Skype, social networking, maybe also Twitter, vlogs, knolls
• and then what?
  emergence of 'new countries'
  with their own demands
not just BRIC, also smaller emerging economies (not just those with oil)

'new' applications (conditions) beyond motor disorders
(that are not really new at all)

Remember András Pető and the origins of the system

• and perhaps you have your own, further suggestions

Put this lot together and you would have had unstoppable forces for change, anyway

• you would have seen the slow, painful emergence of 'global CE'
• along with 'new' structures ('relations')
• new funding systems, to replace the old goal of state + charity
• private practice, commercial companies/partnerships, self-employment
• conductors working not just as conductors
• but using their understandings in other roles

And less tangible, but very important (essential even)

• generalised principles to define and hold the whole thing together
• otherwise, how could 'Conductive Education' survive in this as an entity?

I would have examined the originally proposed topics of the lecture in this already uncertain-enough context:

• conductors as a new and developing 'profession'
• the range and types of special educational practice
• the three-layered meaning of 'multi-disciplinary'
• whether conductors are necessary for CE
• and whether they are sufficient

…here and in the developing world

Even if the world and its economics were to have remained as they were only a few months ago

• we would have seen further patchy shift in the heritage of András Pető
• Conductive Education would have faced growing diversification
• and critical evaluation and modification
• to counter which, explicitly formulated principles just might have been more widely discussed and Conductive Education might have shifted laboriously

...from a merely international
...to a truly global stage.

2. What has changed over the last two-three months?

Sub-prime mortgages, repossessions, bank collapses, share falls, savings/pensions in trouble, companies merging/closing, redundancies, unemployment, whole national economies going to the wall, falling prices and falling interest rates, the imminent threat of deflation...

• the first effects upon the 'real economy'
• now spreading public awareness that we really are in trouble
• and talk of 'austerity'
What are we waiting for next? You tell me!
• what about the 'public sector''?
• not just the bureaucrats
• but also health, welfare and social services

Where is CE in all this?
It is in the real economy
• providing services for people who are about as low down in public and political priority as anyone can be
• competing for diminishing financial resources (very fast diminishing resources)
• trying to squeeze funds out of the public sector
  …and/or or dependent upon 'charitable giving'
  …and/or looking for people to pay for their Conductive Education out of their personal surplus income.

Predictions, please…

*Nil desperandum*, conductivists. Take a positive slant:
• everyone is now in the same boat (the playing field is being bulldozed level)
• who/what else will be any better off on the long run (other professions, services)
• how much longer is the 'long run' for those now regarding themselves 'safe'?
The bigunknown for *everyone, everywhere* (not just for Conductive Education):
• …*either* we face a tight time (then everything will 'get better', i.e. it will be much the same as it is now)
• *or* we face major social and economic change (and things will never be the same again)

If the outcome is to be predominantly the second of these what is there to do now?
• rearrange the deckchairs while the band plays on ('displacement activity'!)
• 'KBO' (W. Churchill)
• 'hope for the best and plan for the worst'
• at least change the mind-set, and start 'post-apocalyptic' thinking
• (post-apocalyptic planning, is that even possible at this stage?)

Who/what will survive (not just in Conductive Education)?
• again, think positive
• for example, think Triassic-Jurassic extinction
• the dinosaurs almost all disappeared (leaving a few alligators, some turtles and a lot of birds)
  ...but also leaving the mammals inherit the earth!

Now is the time for little bunnies to look to their potential strengths:
• adapt and evolve
• find comfortable ecological niches
• adapt and multiply
• and take over the world.

3 So... whatever next?

• Conductive Education may not be able to survive intact in the now familiar forms of its international stage
• And there will be no time to redeploy and reconstruct to resolve its internal contradictions for itself
• External forces may impose such change upon us
  ...more and faster than might be wished. If, to put it simply, the money dries up.

That need not necessarily mean curtains for Conductive Education and the heritage of András Pető

• What are our evolutionary advantages (and disadvantages)?
• What are the triumphs/failures?
• What are the strengths/weaknesses of world-wide Conductive Education?

These may be vital factors in what happens next.

• Triumphs/strengths. Demonstrable adaptability; geographical spread and diversity (in practice and structures); continuing parental enthusiasm; a continuing implicit identity (but see next paragraph); a mass of barely realised potentials yet to be elaborated/demonstrated; an as yet barely realised generalisability to a wider range of applications/conditions; demonstrable potential for adaptation to new theatres (Internet, developing world, others?); long, often productive experience (by some) of attack, shortage, stress and endurance; a tradition of survival against the odds despite severe shortage and adamant opposition (András Pető again, and also many of the international pioneers of recent years); some very idealistic and altruistic people. As a result, conductive pedagogy has been successfully implemented, in all sorts of situations. What else?

• Failures/weaknesses. No coherent, agreed explicit account of the system; therefore all sorts of would-be emulations; no effective representative bodies (employers, employees, users); so no unified positions/actions; little culture of collaboration; no obvious allies in existing systems; no political support, no leadership, or 'followership'; poor communication, internal and external: some 'weak links'. And with rare exceptions, conductive upbringing, CE's potentially strongest card, has been largely set aside. Er... that's enough failures and weaknesses for now!

Remember the mammals. Can Conductive Education's evolutionary advantages be utilised to outweigh its evolutionary vulnerabilities? Exciting times for the small and warm-blooded! The prospect does rather remind me of the spirit of twenty years ago.

Reference
http://knol.google.com/k/andrew-sutton/notes-towards-a-history-of-conductive/2tv7fpph4s1dn/5
Afterword (31 August 2011)

This lecture was delivered to first-year student-conductors at the National Institute of Conductive Education, on 2 December 2008 and published as a Knol:

http://knol.google.com/k/conductive-education-whatever-next#

I was never comfortable that I had mastered Knol and its formatting. Even so, I do see that as of today this item has attracted 2424 visits. This notwithstanding, did not exite public discussion, either on the Knol itself or in response to an associated posting on Conductive World:

http://www.conductive-world.info/2008/12/conductive-education-whatever-next.html

Perhaps this present reformatting, with a new introduction, still makes a contribution to 2011's discussions.

No attempts been made to update these notes since they were delivered. All those who read them will well know how the global economy has changed since 2008, and their own country's position in this. As for Conductive Education, how has that fared, and what corporate steps are its larger institutions taking in response to changing economics, and changes yet to come? As asked in the title of this lecture from nearly three years ago – whatever next?

And how fare the small and warm-blooded?